

From *Asceticism and Society in Crisis*:
John of Ephesus and the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*,
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PREFACE

The Mediterranean world of late antiquity has in recent years gained popularity with scholars and the lay public both. A lacuna has been present in our studies thus far, however, in the case of a major and compelling writer from this era, John of Ephesus. Living in the sixth century, John led a varied career as a Monophysite monk, missionary, writer, and church leader. Two significant works by John remain extant: his *Ecclesiastical History* and his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. John wrote in Syriac and his focus is often the eastern Byzantine provinces, especially his homeland Mesopotamia. But John's career took him throughout the empire of his day, and he knew the imperial court of Constantinople as intimately as he knew the villages of Amida's regions. John's writings are important in part because they concern a personal encounter with the full Byzantine world of his time, and in part because few writers from late antiquity have opened that world so vividly as he.

John lived through the period spanning the Monophysite movement's greatest successes and defeats. In his youth the Monophysites represented a formidable source of energy and creativity in the Byzantine realm; in his old age, John saw them not simply defeated but stalemated: discredited by the Chalcedonians on the Byzantine throne and incapacitated by their own internal bickerings. Within and beyond this frame of activity were the people of John's world. For John's home, the eastern provinces of Byzantium, the sixth century was above all a time of suffering. Their lands provided the battleground for war between Byzantium and Persia. Their monasteries and church communities, Monophy-

site in faith, endured persecutions by the Chalcedonian government. Famine and plague were chronically ubiquitous. It was a century when tragedy both accountable and capricious was the fabric of daily life.

John has received uneven treatment by modern scholars. Appreciation for his significance was first shown in the pamphlet by J. P. N. Land, *Joannes Bischof von Ephesos der erste syrische Kirchenhistoriker* (Leiden, 1856). Subsequent studies culminated in the monumental work of A. Djakonov, *Ioann Efesskiy* (Petrograd, 1908)—still the only monograph devoted to John. Further efforts followed, primarily textual, and critical editions of John's writings were published in the 1920s and 1930s, accompanied by translations into English for the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* and into Latin for the *Ecclesiastical History*. Nonetheless, John's works continued to be utilized mainly by Syriac scholars, while historians of the late Roman and early Byzantine periods persisted in sidestepping his contribution.

In recent decades, however, scholars of late antiquity have turned to a more comprehensive treatment of the materials available to us, and a greater appreciation for Syriac sources has been apparent. An upsurge in the interest shown for John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History* has accompanied this wider view, and not least because John's records contrast with the contemporary accounts of the Greek literati.

For the most part, John's *Lives of the Eastern Saints* have not shared the limelight. The *Lives* have been used primarily for the information they contain about certain key figures and events in the ecclesiastical crises of the sixth century. Such selective treatment bypasses both what John's *Lives* are about and what they have to offer—as may be seen in two notable exceptions to this situation, Peter Brown's "Eastern and Western Christendom in Late Antiquity: A Parting of the Ways" and Evelyn Patlagean's *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4e–7e siècle*.

This study is an attempt to bring John's *Lives of the Eastern Saints* into view. They provide a different perspective from that of his *History*. Rather than a chronological record of important events, one finds here what is often lacking in such records: the daily world of ordinary people, and how they coped with war, plague, famine, and persecution. Here one sees, above all, Syrian asceticism fully developed. Its practitioners are at home in the small world of the villager, and sometimes, too, in the larger one of the imperial court. But the Syrian ascetics also reflected their times. By the end of the sixth century, even the vitality of this movement had been worn down.

John of Ephesus and his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* provide an opportunity to learn about life in a time and place of drastic events. Here we

can see the ways in which those who have chosen extreme lives are forced by external circumstances into extremities even more severe. In writing the stories of holy men and women whom he had known, John shows us the confrontation between extreme experience and the human necessity of shaping that experience through narrative.

The hesitation that scholars have shown in the instance of John's *Lives* in fact stems largely from its literary form. For despite John's personal acquaintance with his subjects, and despite his professed intention to record in the *Lives* only what he himself has seen or can verify, hagiography alters both an author's material and its presentation. The nature of hagiography does not invalidate the historicity of John's *Lives*, but it does require that we read the text with a particular understanding.

Hagiography is a literary genre in which form is as important as content in understanding the text. Its task is to render the world of human experience comprehensible. It does this in two ways: first, by celebrating the saint (whether real or legendary) as one through whom God acted in the realm of human life; and second, by using a standardized language of literary *topoi* that identified the saint as saint and interpreted the saint's work as that of divine agency. Recognizing the formulaic, non-historical language of hagiography opens the route for treating the standardization itself as historical material. These texts offer us historical information, even in the most stringent sense, only if we can ask the appropriate questions. Standardization in hagiographical language is not a static matter. Favorite themes change; and the criteria of sanctity itself change in accordance with fluctuations in the values of society. Standard hagiographical themes, their periods of fashion and forms of expression, reveal the subconscious concerns of their societies and serve to establish a larger sense of order for those whom they are written to guide.

How, then, can we approach hagiography so as to evaluate the interaction of formulaic and historical material? The text must be heard on its own terms as well as in its hagiographical context; one must separate the standardized material from the author's perspective and establish how and why the author is using the hagiographic medium. There are clues internal to the text: the author's style, emphases, choices and viewpoints, and the author's position as distinct from the subject's. There are also external clues by which to measure the internal evidence: other sources—hagiographical, archaeological, archival, historiographical—and other information can be brought to bear upon the text. The consistency and coherence of a text, the interplay between an author's intent and content, analyses of comparative and contrasting material—all of

these matters are tools by which we can listen more carefully to a text. In the listening, we can discern what the text is saying, and what we can learn from it.

John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints* is a work of hagiography in the historical rather than the legendary tradition of saints' lives. Unlike many works of this kind, John's collection is not primarily stereotyped or didactic. It is a work incorporating a strikingly personal element, as John not only participated in much of what he sets down but also is actively present in his role as author. In the present study, John himself stands at the center. As will be seen, his individualistic manner is constantly apparent; more than a matter of style, John produces a form of hagiography peculiarly his own. His circumstances do much to encourage his individuality.

The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship and interaction between asceticism and society in the sixth-century Byzantine East. In particular, we are concerned with how this relationship works for the Monophysite ascetics, what factors influenced it, and what the consequences and implications may have been.

How do we see the particular historical circumstances reflected in the ascetic experience John describes hagiographically? As John tells us, it was a time when stylites descended from their pillars to enter the arena of religious controversy; anchorites returned to towns and cities to care for the laity in the absence of exiled church leaders; exile became a part of monastic practice; the needs of the laity overrode the sentiments of bishops in the formation of a separate church hierarchy; and women took leadership roles they would otherwise have shunned. The situation of religious controversy was compounded by war with Persians, invasions by Huns, extended famine, bubonic plague, and collective hysteria. We can see the contrast of Mesopotamia in its calamity with the expansion and prosperity experienced elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire during the first half of the sixth century; we can see also the contrast of provincial life to that of the cosmopolitan centers, whether Antioch, Jerusalem, or Constantinople. Our goal here is to break the religious experience down into its component parts, in search of the meaning ascribed to the larger event.

Establishing the historicity of John's text is thus neither the methodology nor the point of this study, nor does it attempt to prove a thesis. Rather, it seeks to see a situation: What is the story John tells? How are we to understand it? This is not a book about John of Ephesus as a historian. I chose to write about his *Lives* because they are not the history of his time but rather the story of the people who live in his world. I will

utilize his *Ecclesiastical History* only as a complementary supplement to the *Lives*. My purpose is to understand what Syriac spirituality meant to these people, both those who practiced an ascetic career and those who did not.

Consequently, this is also not a book about the Monophysite movement, nor is its originating point of reference the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Rather, the point of origin is Syrian asceticism, its roots and development. In this particular instance, the ascetics are also Monophysites. While the church crisis colored their situation, as the book emphasizes, they are not themselves the entire Monophysite body (far from it), nor are they the reason for the separation of the churches. Their spirituality, their asceticism, and their responses to the crises of their times do not depend on their Monophysitism but rather on their Syriac heritage. The continuity of that heritage is ultimately more important than the change brought by persecution.

Because the material is generally unfamiliar to scholars and students of late antiquity, this study starts with an introduction to the Syrian Orient of the sixth century. I do this by focusing on particular texts that illustrate the themes important for John of Ephesus; there is a context in which the ascetic practice John records makes sense in practical as well as symbolical terms. Syrian asceticism did not develop through a sequence of events. It developed in a collective experience, in which individuals and communities pursued a variety of goals for various reasons. The people rather than the events were the determining factors, and they overlapped, clashed, and harmonized in patterns rather than in a clear progression. The same is true of the spirituality studied in this book. Events affected it and forced people to make certain decisions or changes; those circumstances are central to this study insofar as they reveal the people and their spirituality more clearly.

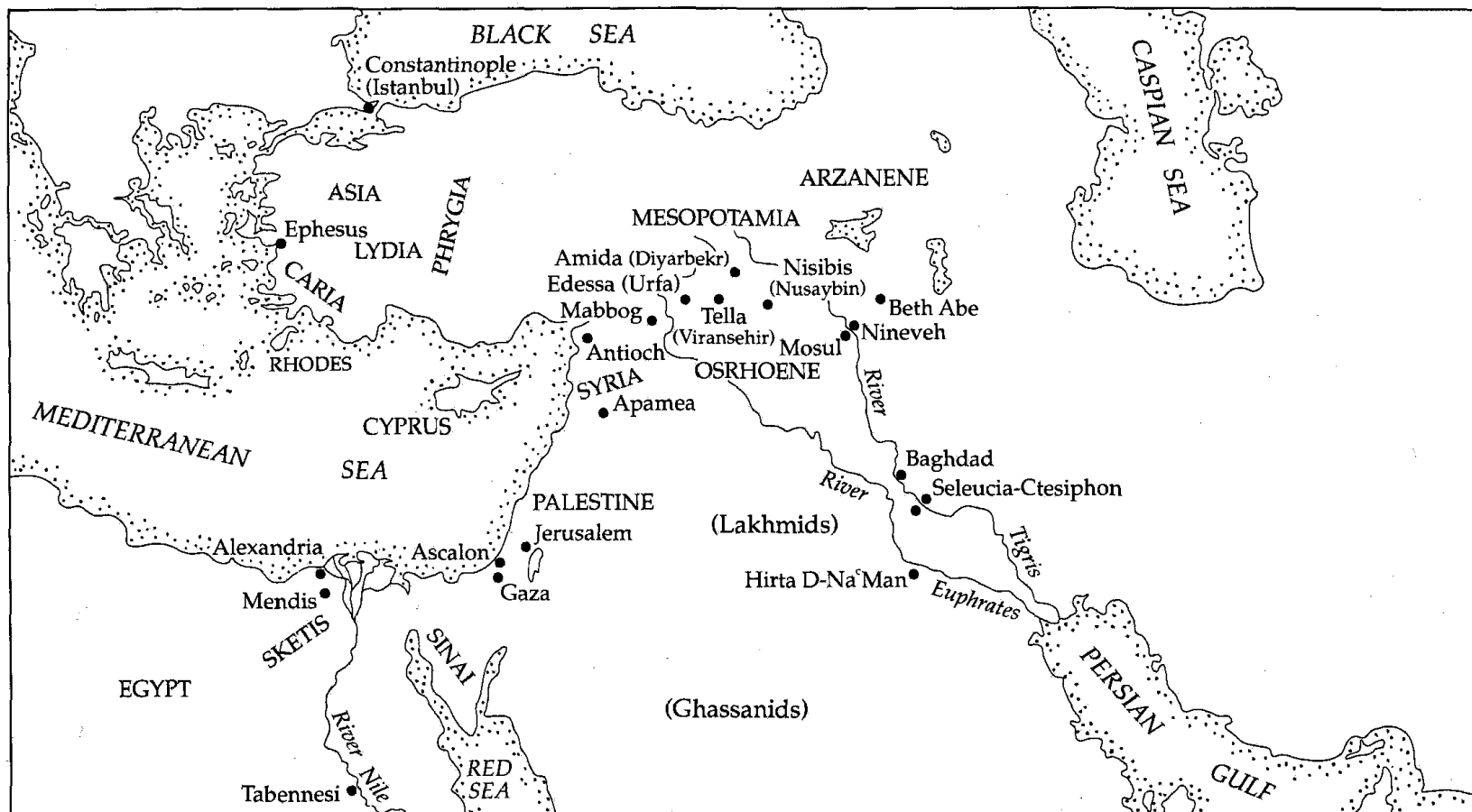
The first chapter then introduces John himself, his writings, and the literary issues of the *Lives*. The following chapters focus on those events that shaped John's collection: the development of asceticism in a time of crisis (chapter 2); the plague of madness in the city of Amida, as a collective societal response to the years of calamity (chapter 3); the impact of exile on monastic practice, and the functioning of monastic communities as refugee camps (chapter 4); mission, the breakdown of Byzantine imperial ideology in the East, and the formation of separate churches (chapter 5); the fluctuating position of women (chapter 6); and, finally, an assessment of John's hagiographical purpose (chapter 7).

In using John's *Lives* to the end, we will work with the awareness that John is writing hagiography for a specific reason and with a specific

intent. In order to see what John is doing and how and why he does it, the *Lives* will be treated throughout this study together with contrasting and complementary writings of late antiquity, both Greek and Syriac. We will seek to clarify the singular experience contained in the work. These are particular people in a particular world. To see them on their own terms and to hear their story as truly theirs is to touch history as a living thing.

Hagiography is about a theology of activity. The careers of the saints are one expression of this theology. The writing of hagiography is another.

Since no one can speak for John of Ephesus better than he himself, I have illustrated this study with his own words as much as possible. For the most part I quote from the translation of E. W. Brooks, though occasionally I have altered the text or, where noted, substituted my own.



John of Ephesus's World

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PURPOSE AND PLACES

When the Amidan ascetics were expelled, some journeyed widely. John himself traveled through Palestine, down into Egypt, across the Anatolian provinces, and on to Constantinople; his journeys provided much of the material for his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. John's accounts of the ascetics who stayed in and around Amida are combined with his narratives of the Mesopotamian ascetics working in larger arenas of Christendom, especially in Egypt and in Constantinople. The combination provides a powerful medium for his ascetic vision, a vision as unified as his subjects and locations are diverse.

EGYPT: THE COMMUNITY WITNESS

Following the lead of Severus of Antioch, Monophysite bishops by choice began to gather in Egypt even before the order of banishment reached their sees; for others, it was the nearest point of refuge.¹ It was not surprising that exiled ascetics should arrive also, drawn as much by the tradition of Egypt's deserts as by the hope for safety.² The first arrivals set the tone: a community was formed, noted for its discipline in faith and in practice. When John of Ephesus set out for Egypt in the early 530s, it was to visit this exiled community.³

The community that interested John was from Palestine, but its roots were Syrian and its fame in John's time rested largely on its identity as a Syrian group. Its founder was the holy woman Susan, by birth from

the Persian territory of Arzanene, an area with strong ties to Syriac Christianity.⁴ Susan had turned to asceticism as a child. At the age of eight she left home, first in pilgrimage to Jerusalem and then to enter a convent in Palestine between Ascalon and Gaza. Some ten years later the persecutions began. Palestine was a major target, and Susan's convent, "since it was large and celebrated," was soon attacked. Facing the alternatives of confrontation or flight, Susan decided to leave for the desert outside Alexandria. Her choice distressed the sisters, who held her in high regard; five chose to follow her, despite her admonitions to the contrary.

From Alexandria the women soon found a suitable place to settle: an area in the desert, not far from the village of Mendis, with an abandoned fortress for shelter.⁵ Removed from the pressure of harassment and with Susan as spiritual guide, the nuns resumed their routine of prayer and labor. The village provided handiwork by which they could earn their keep and also looked after their general welfare.

Susan, however, had longed for solitude, and a nearby cave offered seclusion.⁶ But her testing of her vocation as a hermit brought panic to the sisters, for the nuns looked to her for leadership: "Don't you know that we came out to the desert trusting in you after our Lord? . . . Don't you know that without you we cannot exist?"⁷ At last a compromise had to be reached, and Susan agreed to a split routine, divided between solitude and interludes with her nuns. Susan's contemplative labors provided the embryonic community with a testimony to spiritual authority that did not go unnoticed; the community began to grow. At the same time, its reputation spread. The nuns' story reached a small community of monks, also of Mesopotamian origin, who had lived near to their convent in Palestine but were now suffering pursuit by the Chalcedonian authorities. Hearing of "the quietude and sweetness of that desert," the men soon found their way to the nuns and established themselves in the same area. Numbers in both communities increased as the persecutions elsewhere wore on. Still, the safety of Egypt did not provide an escape from the responsibilities of the religious crisis. Susan desired the anchoritic life, but the congregation outside Mendis required strong leadership because of the circumstances that had brought them together. In the eyes of both the men and the women, Susan alone was capable of this role. For her part, Susan understood that times of crisis demand critical action; although unhappy to assume the role of director for the community of men and women, Susan did so—and she did so very well.⁸

But Susan's community and others like it were more than resettlement camps for refugees. They were places in which the Monophysite

faith was nourished and practiced, providing a steady witness in the midst of persecution. Their impact was strengthened by the parallel activity of Severus himself,⁹ a situation John of Ephesus emphasizes specifically in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*.¹⁰ Fleeing Antioch in 518, Severus had gone first to Alexandria and the hospitality of the patriarch Timothy IV.¹¹ From there he went on to the desert, where he "carried out to the full" the monastic vocation of his youth.¹² As in the case of others with similar experience, Severus' standing as church leader had been reinforced by his early ascetic training at the hands of Peter the Iberian in the monastery of Maïouma outside Gaza.¹³ The return to the ascetic life enhanced his status in the broader world, all the more since withdrawal did not lighten his workload. Severus continued to conduct affairs internal and external for the Monophysite body.¹⁴ There were, however, some who took the patriarch's retreat as an excuse to slacken their ecclesiastical discipline.¹⁵ Severus' fear, unhappily prophetic, was that internal problems were diverting the believers' energy from the real battle at hand.¹⁶ By the nature of his presence and activity in Egypt, Severus enacted the model that John of Ephesus propagated: under persecution the Monophysites witnessed the soundness of their faith, and that witness was grounded in an ascetic practice responsive to times of crisis. John himself praised the religious vehicle Egypt had become in its position as Monophysite base. His account of Thomas the Armenian, for example, relates how this ascetic, while founding a monastic community in his homeland, came to Alexandria both to obtain books and to converse with the leaders and the religious who were gathered there.¹⁷

Elsewhere John offers praise for the Egyptian Monophysite body itself.¹⁸ But in his *Lives* he hints that Egypt's spiritual authority was heightened by the presence of those who brought to it the particular witness of his own ascetic roots; so it is that John includes the story of the two deacons Thomas and Stephen.¹⁹ When the persecutions reached Mesopotamia, Amida's episcopal throne suffered from a crisis in leadership. The bishop Thomas, who had guided Amida since 504/5, died upon the arrival of an imperial order for his banishment in 519. He was succeeded by Nonnus, who survived only three months. The distinguished Mare was then consecrated and expelled, probably in 521. Finally the seat was taken over by the Chalcedonian Abraham bar Kaili, who held it for the next thirty years.²⁰

Mare was banished to Petra; with him there went a small retinue that included the deacons Thomas and Stephen.²¹ Petra proved a harsh place for the Amidans. In desperation, Mare sent Stephen to Constantinople for help.²² There Stephen encountered the future empress Theo-

dora, at the time a newly married patrician. In the peculiar pattern that later became their standard, the royal couple intervened: the place of exile was changed to Alexandria.²³ Soon after, when Mare and his followers were resettled in Egypt, they heard of other Amidans in the region and of Susan's community in the desert of Mendis.²⁴ It did not take long for Thomas and Stephen to find their way there. Thomas in particular was inspired and longed to partake of their spiritual discipline. In a "pit" not far from the community—possibly the "cave" that Susan herself had used for solitary practice—the deacon undertook the hermit's vocation.

But Thomas' story is joined to that of his comrade Stephen, and their partnership, as John writes it, is essential.²⁵ Stephen himself was no less fervent than Thomas, but chronic infirmity had modified his own asceticism. At the time of Thomas' decision, Stephen, showing a sentiment near to John's, begged his friend not to seek so rigorous a practice: "For ourselves, this is too great a thing to live in the desert on account of our feebleness; but, my brother, let us look after our soul, and gain a desert by our manner of life and our heart, and always entreat the Lord to cause his grace to shine upon us."²⁶ Thomas was undeterred; after one brief trip home to sort out his affairs, he labored in his pit for many years until his death. But John leaves no doubt in the reader's mind as to Stephen's own excellence: the gentler deacon went on to achieve great works as a leader in the refugee community of Constantinople and as an adviser to the empress Theodora, so touched by her first meeting with the Amidan. As elsewhere in John's *Lives*, these two men and their respective works are shown as two halves of the same whole; each completed the other.

However, it was the likes of Thomas that made Monophysite Egypt more than a cauldron of discontent, a point that John does not fail to underscore. Eventually Egypt had to be dealt with as the haven it had become. A Chalcedonian government could not allow the continued nourishment of a dissenting church. Justinian's efforts towards Chalcedonian restoration in Egypt began in 536, following the final breakdown that year of religious negotiations in Constantinople. His measures led to bloodshed that was to last decades and in Alexandria in particular was to flare up at every excuse.²⁷ It was not until John the Almsgiver assumed the patriarchal seat in 611 that serious attempts were made to win over the Egyptian Monophysites, rather than to force submission.²⁸ In fact, John's eight years on the throne were spent pacifying memories of Chalcedonian atrocities committed at a level "unknown even among the pagans."²⁹

Still, Egypt's deserts were vast, its ascetic communities numerous and remote. Imperial officials could not compete with the loyal monastic networks; Egypt continued to offer escape for the persecuted. In the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, John of Ephesus speaks of Severus' exile after his final banishment by imperial decree in 536; at the same time, he points to the nature of the authority that the Monophysites gained by practice in Egypt, such as that of Thomas or, indeed, such as that found in Susan's community.³⁰ Working for the Monophysite faithful—and in irreproachable company—Severus completed his days. But the kind of refuge Egypt now offered gradually transformed the haven into a house prison.

CONSTANTINOPLE: INDIVIDUALS IN COMMUNITY

Monophysite refugees had one other base at which to gather during Justinian's reign: the imperial city itself.³¹ Severus had paved the way by his presence there during the early years of the sixth century, under sponsorship of the emperor Anastasius. As the story of Thomas and Stephen indicates, another powerful source of influence was now had in the empress Theodora. Through her, favors could be sought and, in Constantinople, safe shelter found.

The curious bipartisan religious loyalties of Justinian and Theodora played a fundamental role during their reign. Justinian's commitment to Chalcedonian faith and Theodora's to the Monophysites seemed odder for the fact that theirs was truly an imperial partnership.³²

Traditionally, the key to their religious differences has been sought in the writings of Procopius.³³ Procopius insists that the antithetical loyalties of the pair were in fact an illusion, that they purposely cultivated this appearance as part of a larger policy to divide and rule. "They set the Christians at variance with one another, and by pretending to go opposite ways from each other in the matters under dispute, they succeeded in rending them all asunder."³⁴ A similar view is offered by Evagrius Scholasticus,³⁵ a more cautious historian, who claims that the ecclesiastical policy of Justinian and Theodora was one that allowed them to divide the empire between themselves: by dividing their religious loyalties they gave way to neither, while ensuring that both sides were cared for financially as well as politically. But Evagrius indicates the complexity of the situation by adding that in matters of faith, fathers were opposed to sons, sons to parents, wives to husbands, and husbands to wives.³⁶

Monophysite sources offer ample tribute to Theodora and her works on their behalf. It was Theodora who brought relief from the persecutions, whether by influencing Justinian to relent even briefly or by providing safe refuge; it was she, too, who sheltered and protected the Monophysite patriarchs while they visited the royal city, and she who gave money for the relief of the ascetic refugees; and it was her death that marked the end to Monophysite hopes, according to some sources.³⁷ Syrian tradition went so far as to rewrite altogether the history of the empress's notorious youth. The child of a circus family who grew up on stage as a sexual acrobat became the chaste daughter of a Monophysite priest in the eastern provinces, with whom the young Justinian fell in love while on a military campaign. Her parents, this story went, were alarmed by Justinian's Chalcedonian views and agreed to a betrothal only on the grounds that he would leave her faith unchanged.³⁸

Theodora was undoubtedly as loyal to the Monophysite cause as she appeared. Her conversion to this theological stance apparently happened while she was in Egypt, long before her marriage to Justinian,³⁹ and Chalcedonian sources also attest the money and effort she expended on their opponents.⁴⁰ Less clear is the exact nature of Justinian's religious convictions. Monophysite sources present a confused memory of the matter. Even some of the sources that record the persecutions offer praise for Justinian's religious activities.⁴¹

In fact, our subtlest picture of Justinian, and of the perhaps more elusive Theodora, emerges from the pen of John of Ephesus, who knew the royal family well. It is apparent in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* that John holds a heartfelt respect for both, regardless of official imperial policies—a situation the more profound for its circumstances.⁴²

In the *Lives*, John praises Theodora's works and mentions her activities apart from Monophysite affairs; he neither shuns nor exploits her rise from prostitution to the imperial throne.⁴³ Yet, John also indicates that the empress's efforts on behalf of the Monophysites were successful only to a certain degree: she was able to intercede for mercy on behalf of her supplicants and to sponsor the maintenance of the many refugees who came to Constantinople. Nonetheless, these measures amounted to little more than providing immediate comfort for those in need. Constantinople, like Egypt, became a convenient house prison by which the government could curtail the activities of its dissidents; similarly, Theodora's protection for the vulnerable Monophysite patriarchs, though allowing for their safe concealment, did not permit them freedom of movement.

It is in relation to Theodora that John offers information on Justinian's nature. Not only did the empress act with the emperor's knowledge, but he himself sometimes patronized the Monophysites in the capital.⁴⁴ He accompanied her on visits to the Monophysite holy men for religious instruction and, even after her death, continued to show concern for the welfare of the Monophysite community, especially in Constantinople, because of his love for her and devotion to her memory.⁴⁵

Then, too, this Chalcedonian emperor chose John to perform extensive missionary work against pagans and heretics (primarily Montanists) in Asia, Phrygia, Caria, and Lydia.⁴⁶ Few have doubted that John used the opportunity to spread Monophysitism; although Michael the Syrian reports that John propagated Chalcedonian faith because he was acting at the emperor's behest, and that he judged it a lesser evil than paganism or Montanism.⁴⁷ John clearly had the privilege of forthright speech with Justinian.⁴⁸

But the emperor's position was understandably affected by diverse concerns.⁴⁹ His aspirations to regain the lost western provinces necessitated courting the papacy by advancing an official pro-Chalcedonian policy. At the same time, he took this crisis seriously as a theological problem. He rejected what he saw as the too easily categorized pro- and anti-Chalcedonian positions and sought a solution that could reconcile the language of Chalcedon with that of Cyril of Alexandria. He marked this idea with "conversations" he sponsored between Chalcedonians and Monophysites. Over the course of his reign his own theological writings progressed significantly towards this goal. Ironically, his final lapse into aphthartodocetic heresy gave witness to deeply Monophysite leanings in his personal theology.⁵⁰

The imperial conversations were sporadically convened from the time of Justinian's accession but were regarded by the Monophysite leaders, at least, as less than serious efforts. Nonetheless, the failure of these dialogues to reach satisfactory results did not daunt the spirit of the Monophysite community for a surprisingly long time but instead seemed to spark their optimism. Perhaps the simple fact that these dialogues took place sustained their confidence as to their own strength.

However, the designated spokesmen for the conversations did not share such a view. Severus of Antioch, for one, was convinced from the start that a peaceful resolution was impossible.⁵¹ For a time he continued to refuse numerous imperial summonses, so the first large-scale attempt at discussions held in 532 took place without him.⁵² Even so the Monophysite cause was impressively represented by John of Tella, John of Beith-Aphthonia, and others. The three-way interchange, between Jus-

tinian, the pro-Chalcedonian bishops, and the Monophysites was exhausting and hazardous. It did not work, and the telling point was its failure on what amounted to practical rather than theological grounds: although Justinian granted generous theological concessions, he would not suspend the policy that bishops had to sign a document accepting the Chalcedonian definition in order to hold their sees.⁵³ In other words, while gaining their right to dissent, the Monophysites would not be allowed to resume their ecclesiastical positions without actually accepting the Chalcedonian definition they had rejected. Politics ruled the event. Severus' absence bothered Justinian, as it should have.⁵⁴ The gathering dissolved without achieving a compromise.

Repeated summonses to Severus, prompted by Theodora, produced no result, for he argued that if he came to Constantinople, public opinion would be dangerously provoked.⁵⁵ Finally, in 534/5 Severus conceded, pressured from all sides about the urgency of what was taking place in the capital.⁵⁶ For a year and a half after that, efforts were made on all parts to reach an understanding. Alarmed, the Roman papacy intervened, a move that culminated in a renewed proclamation of Chalcedon and a final condemnation in 536 of Severus and the other Monophysite bishops.⁵⁷ When Theodora died in 548, a lukewarm attempt was made to bully the Monophysites, now without their imperial advocate, into an agreement. It showed itself as markedly ill judged: the extreme measures had served only to harden the Monophysites' convictions.⁵⁸ The General Synod of Constantinople in 553 with its condemnation of the "Three Chapters," and the renewed initiative in 571 of Justinian's successor, Justin II, to seek theological resolution through imperially sponsored dialogues, proved futile.⁵⁹ John of Ephesus wrote of these times, describing the Monophysite spokesmen who came repeatedly to the imperial city, "seething, burning with zeal for unity" on each occasion, each time leaving with nothing at all accomplished.⁶⁰

In his *Lives* John of Ephesus indicates that the Monophysite community in Constantinople grew up during the early years of Justinian's reign for two basic reasons. First, some came to the imperial city out of anger to protest against the anti-Monophysite policies. This was not a foolhardy act. When Constantine I convened the Council of Nicea in 325, he sanctioned imperial accountability on religious issues. Matters of dispute could be, and frequently were, brought before an imperial audience by holy men or women whose spiritual authority superseded their often unimpressive civil statuses.⁶¹ Second, some of the Monophysite body were drawn to the capital by the patronage of Theodora, whose thirst for spiritual direction was great. Despite the violence of popular

opinion against Monophysite thought in Constantinople,⁶² it was a natural gathering place: the sheer concentration of life in the New Rome somehow gave space for all who came.⁶³ While Egypt offered a stabilizing center for the persecuted Monophysite movement, in the overall circumstances attention inevitably shifted to Constantinople once Justinian and Theodora ascended the throne. Dependent on those who stayed behind to care for the faithful, the Monophysite community in the imperial city presented a pattern of activity that profoundly substantiated the moral force of their position.

John of Ephesus presents the Constantinopolitan community during the years of Justinian's reign with a particular tone of confidence. Here his stories are heroic, filled with forceful acts by the Monophysites and cowering humility by the Chalcedonians. John's tone in these stories is distinct, presenting a picture of far greater impact than can possibly have been the case. But since the solution to the religious conflict within the Byzantine Empire lay in the hands of the imperial court, these stories suggested to the wider Monophysite audience that their position with the authorities remained strong. The stories offer, too, the comforting picture of the Monophysite holy men interceding effectively on their behalf in the presence of their earthly rulers no less than with those above.

The stylite Z'ura was one of the first to come.⁶⁴ Forced down from his pillar near Amida by Chalcedonian zealots, he had set off at once for Constantinople in order to protest the state of religious affairs, accompanied by a band of trusted disciples, perhaps in the year 535.⁶⁵ But Z'ura was more than a disgruntled stylite; he was a holy man whose career had set him in a position of authority for the eastern Monophysites. His impact on the imperial city is attested elsewhere than in John's account,⁶⁶ a point that lends weight to John's claim that Chalcedonian informers had warned Justinian to watch out for Z'ura's arrival.⁶⁷

In John's story, Justinian prepared himself for the encounter. But Z'ura arrived with such presence and spoke so bluntly that Justinian's only response was a temper tantrum. John tells us that Z'ura left the court "in violent rage" and returned to his holy works, now in the confines of the royal city. John portrays the entire sequence as one continuous and valiant action: Z'ura's ascetic practice, his labors on the pillar, and his foray into Constantinople and perhaps into the palace itself, all in fulfillment of the holy man's vows. There was neither hesitation in the stylite's actions nor faltering in his ascetic practice, despite the dangers of persecution.⁶⁸

In earlier days, Daniel the Stylite had prefigured this action, also with extravagant drama, when he descended his pillar during the brief reign of the usurper Basiliscus; but in Daniel's case, the stylite had acted in support of the opposing cause of Chalcedonian faith and (by default) that of the emperor Zeno.⁶⁹ In Z'ura's case, John describes a scene of sharp positions, tinged with a biblical flavor that recalls the meetings between Moses and the Pharaoh of Egypt. Divine intervention led, John tells us, to Justinian falling seriously ill, as if in chastisement for his treatment of the little holy man. Theodora, "who was very cunning," concealed the emperor's condition but summoned Z'ura who, John claims, effected a cure immediately. "And thenceforth the dread of the blessed man fell upon Justinian."⁷⁰ Since Justinian suffered near-fatal illness more than once during his reign, John may well be conflating a group of events in attributing one of these occasions to Z'ura's encounter with the emperor.⁷¹ But more importantly for John, the story enables him to present a chastened emperor, whether because Theodora had put pressure on him or because Z'ura himself had proved so commanding. According to John, Justinian recanted and paid due homage to the stylite, "but only the state of the church he did not set right."⁷²

But John could turn even this ambivalent victory to Z'ura's advantage. He tells us that the stylite and his disciples proceeded to undertake a ministry within Constantinople, working with the poor and strangers and becoming very popular as a result. Theodora herself provided his place of residence, a villa at Sycae across the Golden Horn.

John further relates that Z'ura's reputation had reached Rome, worrying the pope who later humiliated himself in a vain effort to confront the stylite.⁷³ Eventually, Z'ura's standing in the public eye grew large enough to warrant a response from the palace. The empress sent him to a camp in Thrace that she provided for Monophysites, lest he bring about "sedition and evil in the city [of Constantinople]."⁷⁴ By this time, Theodosius, the patriarch of Alexandria, had also settled there in exile, and John tells us, "thereafter the blessed men dwelt there together, while that camp thundered praise."⁷⁵

John portrays the Monophysite ascetics who came to Constantinople, whether to protest or to seek shelter, as persons of serious consequence to the life of the city and to the imperial couple. For example, he tells the story of Mare the Solitary, an Amidan ascetic who had pursued his vocation in Egypt. When the persecutions struck there, he too responded by hastening to Constantinople and forcing his way into the court.⁷⁶ Mare's behavior was so extreme that even John was shocked,

and while praising his motives, he could not bring himself to present the details of Mare's encounter with Justinian and Theodora.⁷⁷

Mare settled in Constantinople's environs, though his desire for solitude led him also to Sycae across the water. John presents Mare's ascetic discipline as if it were as forceful a weapon as his assault on the imperial court. People marveled, Justinian and Theodora no less than others. Indeed, John claims that Theodora pursued the solitary, begging his personal guidance; but when she flooded him with messages, gifts, money, and requests, the Amidan holy man scorned them all.⁷⁸ Instead, after some time as a recluse, Mare used money earned from his own labors to found a monastery that served as a hospice for the poor. Thus, Mare's days were passed "practicing mighty spiritual labours . . . and stoutly always reproving the king and queen with great freedom and without fear, and everyone marvelled at his teaching and at his deeds and at his words."⁷⁹

Ascetics like Z'ura and Mare continued the Syrian tradition of religious vocation as an individual action beyond the confines of church or monastic institution. John understood the import of their presence in Constantinople in specific terms. When the Great Plague struck the city, Mare was to be one of its victims. John offers the story of Mare's life in much the same way as the solitary offered himself in sacrifice during the scourge. Thus, while the populace suffered the dreadful destruction, Mare "passed his time in affliction and great sorrow, and occupied himself with constant prayer and petition to God . . . kneeling and praying on behalf of the whole world."⁸⁰ At his death, John claims, Justinian and Theodora commanded a magnificent procession in honor of the blessed man. The words John speaks for another ascetic are also meaningful here: Mare died, "nothing whatever having been found to weaken him, or to make him remit what he had originally undertaken, not sickness nor persecutions nor any other distresses."⁸¹

CONSTANTINOPLE: THE COMMUNITY WITNESS

In contrast to the negotiations and the theological dialogues, and as if to provide a practical defense for Monophysite theology, Theodora took the occasion of the persecutions to gather an impressive flock of ascetics to the imperial city.⁸² Thus when John narrated the "Lives of Thomas and Stephen,"⁸³ he specified Theodora's reasons for bringing Stephen to the imperial city: "because of his eloquence and his conversa-

tion and his wisdom, and moreover because he also lived a pure life and after the manner of a solitary."⁸⁴

In John's view, the ascetics brought at the empress's request were no less worthy than those, such as Z'ura or Mare, who came of their own volition. For his part, Stephen had not been happy to receive the imperial summons to a far more public life than he would have wished, but he chose to accept it. Like John's other subjects, Stephen pursued his ascetic practices in Constantinople with the same humility that he had shown elsewhere. John found him there,

a great harbour of rest for all the afflicted who used to repair to him from all quarters . . . so that even the king and queen themselves stood in awe of his venerable mode of life.⁸⁵

Comprised of such figures, the Constantinopolitan community appeared to the Monophysite body as a witness to their faith in the midst of the very city that produced their trials. So John paid homage to those "gathered together in the royal city by the believing queen," where

the congregation of persecuted saints was so widely extended that it shone with many who had under the constraint of the persecution come down from columns and been ejected from places of seclusion, and been expelled from districts, and their congregation was rendered illustrious by great and distinguished heads of convents from all quarters of the east and of the west, and Syria and Armenia, Cappadocia and Cilicia, Isauria and Lycaonia, and Asia and Alexandria and Byzantium, countries which beyond others burned with zeal for the faith.⁸⁶

This company settled in the city under the empress's aegis at the palace of Hormisdas; some, such as Stephen, settled in the imperial residence itself.⁸⁷ With Theodora's generosity, they transformed their quarters into monastic dwellings. One could enter Hormisdas "as into a great and marvellous desert of solitaries and marvel at their numbers, and wonder at their venerable appearance."⁸⁸ Their impact on the imperial city was, John tells us, disconcerting:

Many of the supporters of the synod of Chalcedon . . . when they saw this marvellous community, and learned the causes of the persecution of it, had their mind filled with affliction and contrition, and renounced the Chalcedonian communion, and asked for communion with them.⁸⁹

To this body Theodora came frequently, "going round among them and making obeisance to them and being regularly blessed by each one of them." Justinian, too, "who was ranged against them on account of the synod of Chalcedon," came and "was attached to many of them and trusted them, and was constantly received and blessed by them."⁹⁰ One

can allow for considerable exaggeration by John with regard to the actual impact of the Monophysite community on the Constantinopolitans, but the spirit he portrays among the Monophysites themselves must lie close to the mark, for it was this spirit that provided the strength to build their own independent tradition. John would have it that the exiled community had turned a "foreign" land into their own; they had transformed a place of persecution into one of worship.

John heightened his emphasis on the role of the Constantinopolitan community by placing his account of it alongside a brief chapter commemorating the Monophysite patriarchs "who distinguished themselves in exile in the time of persecution."⁹¹ This chapter primarily praises the leadership team of Severus of Antioch, Theodosius of Alexandria, and Anthimus of Constantinople, who became the main target for the final banishment orders in 536. Anthimus, formerly bishop of Trebizond, had participated in the imperial conversations of 532 as a Chalcedonian delegate. But he had been deeply moved by the Monophysite arguments and came to develop a close friendship with Severus when the latter arrived at the imperial city. His consecration to Constantinople in 535, like that of Theodosius to Alexandria in the same year, owed much to Theodora's efforts. Once he had been won over to the Monophysite cause, Anthimus remained steadfast despite the hardships involved.⁹² Severus, Anthimus, and Theodosius together and individually served the Monophysite movement with spirit and skill during the persecutions, almost entirely while suffering their own hardships in exile.⁹³ Their concerted energies were crucial for stabilizing the Monophysite movement as a whole; the lack of such unified effort by their successors contributed to the disintegration of the Monophysites into bickering factions toward the end of the sixth century.⁹⁴

The Monophysite refugees in Constantinople made their impact largely because the Monophysite leadership was articulate and cohesive in providing a theological basis for their witness of faith. In turn, the leadership was strengthened by having this disciplined ascetic following prominently in view.⁹⁵ But John did not allow his readers to forget the realities of the situation. Thus he includes the "Life of Tribunus," a layman who accompanied the expelled Amidan monks to Constantinople and whose story offers a different shading to John's portrait of life in the refugee community.⁹⁶

Tribunus was from Sophanene, near Amida, born of a wealthy and well-educated family. He became a frequent visitor at the monastery where Habib and Z'ura dwelt, and he continued to follow Z'ura's guidance when the holy man ascended his pillar after Habib's death. When

the persecutions forced the stylite down, Z'ura chose Tribunus to accompany him to the imperial city, "as an interpreter of the Greek tongue." But the pious layman did more than that; he settled in Constantinople with Z'ura and his disciples, "imitating their practices and occupied in spiritual employment." Soon he asked permission to take monastic vows. Suddenly, vision and necessity collided.

For the blessed men would not allow him, saying "It is better both for you and for us that you should go in and out of the city and the palace as a layman, and carry communications for us." . . . And so he performed the service . . . insomuch that he gained easier entry and more freedom, and they even thrust the office of a count on him under constraint by [Z'ura's] command saying, "This will be no impediment to your practices; and when you wish, it is easy for you to give up the office."⁹⁷

"Count" Tribunus obeyed (though, as a secular appointment, the office had to have come from Justinian), acquiring the worldly title and means he had always scorned when pushed in that direction by his family. Finally, Z'ura died; the layman was now free to answer his calling. He did so, "accomplishing the labor of his practices on a great scale, having also added to his spiritual labours the extra labour of hospitality and the relief of the poor, living and delighting also in voluntary poverty."⁹⁸

As an ascetic, Tribunus fit precisely the model John praised. His withdrawal from the temporal world was in no way the abandonment of those who were in the world; his turning to the spiritual life was a turn to the life of service. Yet Tribunus was for many years denied his full vocation by those who were its greatest exponents, this for reasons of simple expediency.

John's account of Tribunus makes two points. First, whatever triumphs might be claimed for the exiles, their position remained insoluble. Tribunus, "who in habit was a layman and a count, but in the performance of excellence complete and perfect,"⁹⁹ was proof that when the Monophysite ascetics were forced into the methods of the temporal world, their faith was not necessarily belied. But second, and perhaps more decisively as John again puts forth his view, holy presence, or divine agency, cannot be confined to a space separated from the temporal realm and its needs. Rather, a layman, as much as a stylite, might be the occasion of God's presence in the world. Thus, John tells us, the gathering grew, gradually gaining its own reputation for ascetic excellence.¹⁰⁰

But John does not imply that the imperial city was devoid of its own authoritative witness. A telling example is his account of Theodore, who was chamberlain and *castrensis* in the imperial court.¹⁰¹ Theodore con-

ducted his work in the royal palace while "living in fasting and constant prayers, and sorrow and tears and works of charity." In fact, he had found a model for this double-edged career in an old man who had served the court before him as *praepositus sacri cubiculi*.¹⁰² But after a time, Theodore longed for undistracted pursuit of the divine. He asked permission from Justinian to leave "the turmoil of the palace" and to "devote himself to the practice of religion only."¹⁰³

The emperor granted the request and Theodore turned to serving the city's poor and needy; the wealth he brought with him was rapidly spent. John describes Theodore, whom he often saw, as "intoxicated with the fervour of divine love," but many in the ascetic community felt concerned because he had soon reduced himself to destitution. Unexpectedly, John says, Justinian himself intervened, granting the ascetic a substantial annual stipend, enough both for Theodore and for much work with the poor.¹⁰⁴

John presents the Constantinopolitan Monophysite community honestly. The witness displayed by its members did not conceal the reality that this shelter from persecution was little more than a house prison for dissidents. The community was compelled to make compromises even to maintain its own ascetic integrity, as in the case of Tribunus, in order to remain active; indeed, the more prominent leaders had to be kept virtual prisoners by the empress, so great was the care required to keep them safe.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, as Theodore's story implies, much of the Monophysites' freedom in the capital was possible because of Justinian's beneficence rather than Theodora's activities. The emperor was sensitive to expressions of genuine faith, and he found among the Monophysites an element of religious spirit that truly did move him, despite his official policies against Monophysites elsewhere and despite his harsh treatment of heretics, pagans, and Jews.¹⁰⁶

But if John was honest in describing the life of the exiled community in the capital, his enthusiasm was unimpaired. The refugees arrived, he tells us, to find the means for resuming their vocations. Here too there was work to be done. So it was for John's compatriot Hala, who reached the imperial city ill from the hardships endured en route.¹⁰⁷ But the sight of the ascetic gathering in the palace of Hormisdas, and of the many suffering people of the city itself, was for him like manna from heaven:

Like a poor man who loses one of his great possessions, and decides in his mind that it will never be found again, and suddenly sees it and is astonished and glad, so it was with this blessed man also . . . and so he perfectly carried out all the ministry to the needy. . . . [And he] sought that one object, to relieve persons in trouble, till everyone was astonished at him and they gave thanks to God.¹⁰⁸

In the face of so many individuals carrying out such activities, it was no surprise that Justinian's successor, Justin II, felt it necessary to persecute the Monophysite gathering in the capital with a severity previously reserved for the provinces.¹⁰⁹

The accounts John offers of ascetics in Egypt and Constantinople are not separable from his narrations of the Amidan community. The *Lives* tell us why the Monophysite ascetics of the East played such a critically complementary role to that of the movement's leaders, solidifying the cause at a popular level. In Amida's villages, in Egypt's deserts, and in the imperial city itself, Monophysite spiritual life was pursued in the midst of temporal turmoil and in the midst of secular society.

EPILOGUE. AMIDA AND CONSTANTINOPLE: HOLY PRESENCE

Private contemplation of the divine and personal ascetic pursuits do have their place in John's presentation, but their purpose is specifically allotted and not portrayed as self-justifying. John does not disapprove of those who follow such practices, but the infrequency and the brevity of his accounts on such subjects indicate their secondary position in his scheme; they are congruous with his overall portrait only when their wider context is established. So, for example, with Thomas and Stephen, the single-minded seclusion of the first and the selfless labors of the second are juxtaposed in such a way that each is validated by the other. But an impressive statement of John's perspective on solitary practice can be found in his two accounts of holy fools.

The holy fool represented an ultimate severance from the temporal world, one so complete as to be completely internalized. Consequently, it was displayed by disguised immersion in the most debauched and cruel aspects of urban society.¹¹⁰ Where the ascetic ideal focused on life in a space apart from urban society—in desert, wilderness, monastery, or convent—the holy fool achieved the ideal condition wherever he or she might be in utter estrangement. Dead to the world, no worldly space existed for them: they inhabited only the realm of divine contemplation.

John's most elaborate account is of two holy fools, a man and a woman living in spiritual marriage, who stayed for a time in Amida.¹¹¹ Their story is unique in the *Lives* for it is told secondhand, although John does claim to have seen the couple in Tella.¹¹² The literary incongruity of the story has led to the view that it may be fiction, a story within a story, which John included in his *Lives* for its edifying value.¹¹³ Such a piece is

wholly uncharacteristic of John in this collection; however, the chapter's function in light of John's views remains the same in either case.

The couple masqueraded by day as mime actors, hence as harlot and pimp; they received daily abuse and humiliation. Yet by night they could not be found by those who wished to buy the woman's favors. While they were in Amida, a monk had noticed the strange matter and followed the couple secretly, only to discover that under shield of darkness their profession was not what it had seemed. By night, they prayed in a remote spot on the city walls until dawn threatened their privacy; the air around them shone with radiance. Distressed at having been discovered, and unable to convince the monk that he must publicly abuse them as the crowds did each day, they left for another city to retain their anonymous practice.

The story's actual setting and the couple's perfection offset one another. The couple had been drawn in particular to Amida: "We like being in this city which is a city of Christians."¹¹⁴ Further, their religious practices were exercised on Amida's city walls.¹¹⁵ But as John himself had recounted elsewhere, Amida's experience of tragedy in the sixth century had been overwhelming.¹¹⁶ Its walls had been the scene of treachery and slaughter; its citizens had endured a religious war within their own ranks. Yet this couple had found the city good, "a city of Christians," and had blessed by their acts of prayer the very walls that once had brought destruction.

True or not, the story provides John with a moving statement of redemption and divine favor for the city and its people, themes that are most often his central focus. The Amidan ascetics are affirmed and legitimized here by this outside witness: divine grace was thus made manifest in Amida. The ascetics' own authority could only be strengthened by such testimony.

John recounts one other appearance of a holy fool, this one taking place in Constantinople.¹¹⁷ In contrast to the romantic tones surrounding the couple in Amida, this encounter is clearly genuine; but the contextual parallels are striking. John himself had observed a certain beggar who fearfully fled any offer of charity. Thinking this poor man must in reality be "a spiritual person," John sent one of the monks from his monastery at Sycae to follow him. The monk discovered the man in the act of prayer and, finding the spectacle so powerful, fell into a state of hysteria lasting the entire day despite John's efforts to calm him. When they finally achieved a dialogue with the beggar, he expressed the same loathing of public recognition that the couple in Amida had.

He told John's monk that he was one of seven men leading a life of poverty, anonymity, and ascetic labor in Constantinople; and that the group of them met once each week for the Eucharist and for encouragement. He, too, begged to be left alone and nameless in his labors.

I have given you the information; see that you do not make yourself the cause of my moving from this city, in which I have much peacefulness, and especially the fact that I am reckoned a madman by them, and there is no one who speaks with me. And beg the abbot [John of Ephesus] that though these things are known to him, he will leave me as I am, and not show any difference toward me.¹¹⁸

As discussed earlier, like Amida, Constantinople was caught in the hardships of war, political unrest, and Bubonic Plague. Themselves refugees from the tragedy of the Byzantine East, John and the Monophysite community labored among Constantinople's populace just as they and their comrades had done in the city of Amida. The encounter with the holy fool once again served to offer hope for salvation; grace was present even in Constantinople despite the times. Once more, John's ascetics are granted authority by contact with a practice of single-minded contemplation of God; likewise, this man could pursue his solitary practice with integrity because of its complement in the labors of John's ascetics.

In the course of his *Lives*, John presents several portraits of virtuous solitaires, set in the various locales of his stories. Thus he reminds his readers that he is writing in praise of lives devoted to the divine. They serve to emphasize that spiritual authority and its temporal extension are grounded in a vision of holy presence and divine grace in society's world. And nowhere does John say this more clearly than in his tributes to these holy fools.

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SPIRITUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: CONSEQUENCES OF THE ASCETIC VOW

The works of the exiled community that John of Ephesus records in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* are presented as a logical extension of the ascetic's practice. But the context of these works is larger than the immediate situation of religious persecution. Indeed, John extends the context by the juxtaposition of these narratives to his accounts of missionary activity undertaken by the Monophysites, whether spontaneously by individuals or in accordance with the authority of the collective Monophysite body. John unites the experience of service, exile, and mission in his chapters devoted to the major endeavor of the sixth-century Monophysites: the ordination of those who were to become a new church order. In so doing, he raises the issue of the ascetic's accountability, both for the nonbelieving world and for the believing congregation.

MISSION: INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND COLLECTIVE AUTHORITY

Expansion is not the act of a demoralized church. But the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* record Monophysite missions undertaken both inside and outside Roman borders and, eventually, in direct opposition to the imperially proclaimed "orthodoxy." By the end of the sixth century, Monophysite missions were to produce a substantial church body, whose confines bore little relation to the empire's physical boundaries and

whose members would feel little loyalty to an emperor upholding a faith opposed to their own.¹ If this situation did not directly facilitate the Persian and Arab conquests of the Byzantine East in the seventh and eighth centuries, it certainly undermined basic political assumptions in the East regarding the significance of Byzantium's theocratic imperial authority.

John's *Lives* indicate that missionary activity might come about simply as a result of circumstance. In this context, missionary work is part and parcel of the ascetic vision John offers. Such was the case presented in his "Life of Simeon the Mountaineer."²

Simeon was a hermit who wandered the territories along the upper Euphrates; he "used to go about the mountains like the wild beasts, and . . . had no intercourse except with God."³ Conditions in these regions were such that the ascetic could live in this manner only eight months of the year: the snowy season drove him annually to lower areas. One year, Simeon chanced upon a settled people of the remote mountain summits, whose villages—with their inhabitants loosely scattered over wide distances—were unlike those of the other communities he knew. Surprised at finding domesticated life in such rugged countryside, the hermit inquired about their general livelihood and customs. To his dismay, he discovered that these people were apparently "godless," having no religious practices and acquainted with Christianity only by name. As the situation was made known to him, Simeon's "bones shook from his fright and his tears gushed out."⁴ The hermit was beside himself:

Perhaps it was indeed for this reason that God's grace led me to the mountains here, in order that there may be salvation for these souls that are in the darkness of error. . . . What pagan is there, or what other worshippers of creation, who for so long a period of time would neglect to pay honour to the object of his worship, and would not always worship that which is reckoned by him as God? These men neither worship God like Christians, nor honour something else like pagans and they are apostates against the one and against the other.⁵

Simeon set to work. A little church was found in the district, unused in living memory. Helped by the local inhabitants, Simeon cleaned the chapel, summoned the people of the area, and began to preach. It was as if he spoke to "irrational animals," for the people "looked at him in astonishment, and they had nothing to say." Undaunted, the holy man went on to lay down strict injunctions for their religious conduct, so that they might offer penance for their years of neglect and render fitting worship to God. For Simeon discovered matters to be worse than he had thought. Asking why none of the children had been dedicated to the

religious life of the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant, he was told, "Sir, they have not time to leave the goats and learn anything," upon which "the blessed man marvelled at the people's simpleness and carelessness."⁶

Nor did Simeon's intervention stop there. He imposed further injunctions on the chastened populace against blasphemy, fornication, and murder. Those transgressing his orders Simeon promptly punished; few seemed to question his right to authority. On the contrary, "then [the people] began to feel a little fear, both of God and of the blessed man himself, while he continued sending and fetching all who were on the mountains to the house, and converting them afresh, as if from paganism."⁷

But greater plans were afoot. Simeon gathered the children of the district together and shut them in the church, explaining to their parents that he had a gift for them. Then he separated one-third of the ninety children—eighteen boys and twelve girls—closed the remainder in another room, and with his helper quickly tonsured the chosen thirty, "soothing them with blandishments; and of them some wept, and some were silent." Thus were set apart the foundations of a monastic community and school. An outcry followed, but Simeon persuaded the parents of the virtue of his act, except for two families who refused to part with their children. Within three days the two youngsters had died. "Then the terror of the blessed man fell upon everyone, when the power of his word and of his prayer upon those men was seen; and they also repented."⁸ Simeon's will was never tested again.

The holy man continued his own ascetic practices and, once order had been established, again returned to solitude during the summer season. After twenty-six years of such labor, Simeon grew feeble; and thereafter he stayed in the village, in his cell, and practiced with an equal severity.

And accordingly the blessed man's name had gone out over all that country, and he was a law and a judge of the country; and every matter that was in need of reform was referred to him.⁹

An anchorite in the oldest tradition of the Syrian Orient, Simeon had offered the whole of his existence to God in worship. Having sought the divine in the purity of natural creation, he found it where he least expected it: in the imperfection of human society. John pays tribute to Simeon as one who reveals the unsought possibilities of life dedicated to holy pursuit. For here was a region too remote to be reached by matters afflicting the greater part of the East; indeed, Simeon's story contains

none of the calamities so visible in John's other accounts.¹⁰ Simeon is not drawn or forced out of seclusion by the urgency of crisis. Rather, he is confronted by a "godless" existence, and his reaction is as spontaneous as it is thorough. Set on saving the mountain people, this holy man was not satisfied with offering a church tradition of ritual and preaching; he imposed upon this isolated society the fruits of his ascetic discipline. He was law, judge, and spiritual father to them, far more than priest or abbot.

Simeon had in fact fulfilled an aspect of Syrian ascetic tradition that many had followed before him. Spontaneous missionary activity had long been part of the ascetic's responsibilities in the Syrian Orient, both in Roman and in Persian territory.¹¹ But Simeon was not consciously taking up this role and was thus all the more in accordance with his own heritage: precisely because the Syrian ascetic had of necessity to stay within reach of society, conditions ripe for evangelization arose. As in Simeon's experience, it was more often than not a case of responding by instinct to religious need. But Simeon when instituting his rules of conduct for the villagers did show an intentional awareness of his role; for example, by the early fifth century, it was canonically ruled by the Syrian Church that chorepiscopi should set apart certain sons and daughters of each family, in each village, for the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant.¹²

The story of Simeon the Mountaineer underscores the tie between John's subjects and those ascetics who preceded them. Responsiveness was inherent to the tradition of the Syrian ascetic's vocation. But Simeon's case is one among several John presents that is concerned with mission, and each adds a different dimension to his portrayal of activity in this sphere as a collective act of grace. Comparison highlights the contrasting nuances involved; the case of Simeon the Debater, who became bishop of Beth Arsham in Persia, is one example.¹³

John refers to Simeon the Debater as "the brave warrior on behalf of the true faith." Indeed, this Simeon did more warring than episcopal administering. Something of a legend in his own time, Simeon's story lent itself to melodrama; John played on this with narrative styled as romance. Thus in John's telling of the story, Persia is a land steeped in the hated traditions of Marcion, Bardaisan, and Mani as much as in those of the Nestorians resettled from Roman territory, who were then the majority of the Christian populace.¹⁴ Further, when Simeon debated with the Nestorians on doctrine, the Magi invariably awarded the victory to Simeon and sometimes even converted.¹⁵ As a debater Simeon "put everyone to shame," and was even more skilled "than the ancients."¹⁶

Nestorians trembled at his name. As spokesman for the "orthodox" minority, Simeon traveled with the help of an underground network over vast distances at tremendous speed. Wherever a dialogue on faith was taking place Simeon appeared:

As if God had made him ready and as if the earth had vomited him up, Simeon would suddenly spring up and be present there, since from the greatness of his zeal and fervour of his will he did not rest and sit still in one district.¹⁷

But John's story of Simeon also contains the historical reasons behind his daring and intrigue. By Simeon's time, it was the Nestorians, based at Nisibis in particular, who held sway among the Persian Christians; against these "the blessed Simeon was always strongly armed and ceaselessly contending"¹⁸ in the regions beyond the eastern Roman frontiers, in Persia, and among the Arab tribes. Although John paints Simeon as so impressive that almost everyone who heard him converted, Simeon himself seems to have seen his main task as one within the church body. This was a different matter from that of Simeon the Mountaineer's confrontation with heathenism, or of John of Ephesus' own battle against paganism. "Deeply versed in scripture," Simeon "debated" misguided doctrinal positions, a method of discipline by persuasion.

Simeon's reputation was not unfounded. The Monophysite minority in Persia was periodically harassed by the Magian imperial cult, John claims at the promptings of the Nestorians. On different occasions in the course of his career, Simeon called upon the respective authorities of the emperor Anastasius, the Aethiopian king, and the empress Theodora, each of whom successfully interceded with the Persian king on behalf of that minority.¹⁹ Eventually, Simeon was consecrated against his will and by force to the metropolitan see of Beth Arsham. This added responsibility apparently did not hinder Simeon: "And so he would go about in the interior countries beyond the Persians and make disciples, and convert men from paganism and Magism, and return again to the same country, and strenuously meet those who held the impious doctrine of Nestorius in the same contests."²⁰ Thus Simeon passed his life until he died of old age while on a visit to Constantinople, where he was staying with John of Ephesus.

If the story of Simeon the Mountaineer illustrates the range of responsibilities for the ascetic, that of Simeon the Persian Debater indicates the scope of care needed within the church's own confines. Both accounts are focused on activity outside the mainstream social and political sphere that provides the major context for most of John's *Lives*. But

the particular emphases found in these two narratives illuminate John's other, and considerably briefer, accounts of missionary activity. John was too self-conscious to speak at length of his own role in the missions to the pagans, but his *Lives* offer tribute to the deacons, presbyters, and bishops who aided this undertaking.²¹ Of the campaign itself, John here tells us only that

eighty thousand were converted and rescued from paganism, and ninety-eight churches and twelve monasteries, and seven other churches transformed from Jewish synagogues were founded in these four provinces, Asia, Caria, Phrygia, and Lydia.²²

Elsewhere, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, John writes of these missions performed under imperial aegis and carried out not only in the provinces but in the capital city itself. Pagans were turned from their ways or, failing this, tragically put to death. So too were many heretics: Manichees, Montanists, and others.²³ If Justinian's patronage of the campaign prompted confused speculation about its purpose, John's *Lives* dispelled doubts about the theological tenor of the undertaking.

The ascetics who accompanied John were "strenuous workers."²⁴ These holy men "gained a blessed end" not, John assures us, for any reason other than their own witness in mission.

Each one of them . . . was strengthened to abolish paganism, and overthrow idolatry, and uproot altars and destroy shrines and cut down trees in ardent religious zeal; and . . . all of them also toiled and laboured with us with joy and great earnestness.²⁵

In his *Lives* John names some of his coworkers; but he tells us they were part of an entourage altogether deserving of the same homage. That he should include his helpers in his collection of holy men and women is sufficient statement of their spiritual integrity, whatever the political impetus of the missions themselves; he does not discuss the doctrinal positions of these coworkers, leaving us without knowledge of the group's makeup in this respect. Again, the complexity of Justinian's religious policy comes to view.

To a large extent, the value of John's *Lives* lies in their orientation toward the events and crises of their times, a vantage point often lacking in hagiographical works. It is in his accounts of mission that John merges critical situations in time into the timeless realm of divine activity worked through human agency. The service missions in various cities of Paul of Antioch,²⁶ or the salvific campaigns led by John himself, express an urgency offset by the measure of the two Simeons. For through his tales of the Mountaineer and the Debater, John declares that mission is a labor

intrinsic to asceticism, that times of crisis are inherently those in which the ascetic moves, and that political boundaries offer no barriers to ascetic endeavors.

John portrays mission as an extension of the ascetic vocation and its responsibilities. But such individual autonomy carried inadvertent consequences: it contributed to the development of the Monophysite body into a separate church.

ORDINATION: INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

While John presents better examples of specific activities elsewhere in the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, nowhere in John's writings can the critical juncture of his ascetic vision and its implications be seen more clearly than in his account of the bishop John of Tella.²⁷

John of Tella exemplified all that John of Ephesus admired: he was ascetic, priest, hero, and martyr. He distinguished himself early in his career as a solitary²⁸ but was raised to the bishopric of Constantina/Tella in 519. John of Ephesus tells us that John of Tella conducted his ecclesiastical affairs while continuing his severe ascetic labors. When the persecutions reached Osrhoene in 521, he was expelled along with the other bishops and ascetics of his area; he took his place in the desert with the rest of the exiled community, providing a steadying presence.²⁹

The desert, as we have seen, did not serve as a place of dissociated retreat for the expelled Monophysites; rather, for those like John of Tella, it nourished their spiritual resources. The persecutions were succeeding, even if differently from the way their instigators had hoped.

In the wake of the expulsions the faithful body as a whole was forced by circumstances to reassess its religious situation. For John of Ephesus, the Monophysite believers showed remarkable determination, refusing the poison of "false" shepherding by the Chalcedonians. Instead, pressuring those in exile to provide them with the guidance they required, they asked that new pastors be ordained to meet their needs.

But the blessed men, inasmuch as they were troubled by fear of lighting the furnace of persecution more hotly against them, refused to practice this openly, though they did a few things in secret; and a murmuring on the part of those among the believers who had been banished from every quarter began to be stirred up against the blessed men [the bishops], since they had been reduced to great difficulties. . . . Then all the bishops assembled together, and considered what to do. . . . Finally, out of fear, they refused the thing.³⁰

As the bishops knew, the issue of ordination was not an innocent one; it involved more than avoiding further wrath from the imperial court. The greater issue at stake was the question of orthodoxy and the church. In the history of the dispute over the Council of Chalcedon, despite its lurching from side to side, no rival clerical or ecclesiastical structure had been discussed. The dispute had been played out within the existing church structure and body; despite vehemence on all sides, the opposing groups had resembled political parties that, although based on apparently divergent principles, worked within the same system. Severus of Antioch and the other leaders were more aware of the dangers of moving towards the ordination of a separate clergy than the rank and file of the anti-Chalcedonians. These latter feared for their personal salvation, which might be irreparably damaged in the event of receiving the Eucharist at the wrong hands; salvation to them was far more important than the welfare of the ecclesiastical structure.³¹

Severus did his best to impart an appropriate sobriety to the Monophysite body, strictly adhering to canon law, scripture, and patristic teaching. In exile, he continued to fulfill his responsibilities as patriarch of Antioch in the context of patriarchal jurisdiction, rather than as the leader of an "outside" group. He continually drew upon the precedents, and to his mind parallel experiences, of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus during the fourth-century Arian controversies. To ordain a "private" clergy for the Monophysite body, instead of healing the diseased church from within, should only be a last resort.³²

But the presence of a Chalcedonian clergy in charge of the lay populace was a danger of more tangible proportions for many of the faithful.³³ Finally, John of Tella took their cause before the bishops.

And henceforth whither shall the persecuted and distressed believers who are with us go? Do you wish, pray, that we should send them to those who are every day killing them? For God knows that I for my part was ready for a life of quietude by myself, but that I should leave God's people and church in distress and need, and serve my own self, far be it from me in the Lord's name.³⁴

So sometime before 527, John of Tella having passed his exile thus far in retreat, the Monophysite bishops, apparently sanctioned by Severus himself, granted him special permission to ordain clergy to meet the needs of the faithful. This authority was recognized as an emergency power, since John received the authority to ordain all who came to him if the candidates met the disciplinary standards of the church. The results, as has been said, were sensational.³⁵ Even if John exaggerates the numbers (as he did), the response was great enough to warrant attention.

Multitudes "rushed in crowds to come to the blessed man freely without impediment like a flood that is produced in a river by thick clouds."³⁶ John traveled about, receiving candidates for the priesthood and diaconate in monasteries or makeshift hideaways. While John of Ephesus was quick to glorify the situation, he took care to point out that the bishop's choices did not lack quality for the quantity.

[He was] receiving and dismissing companies of fifty and of a hundred in a day, and even now and again as many as two and three hundred a day, giving expositions and injunctions and caution and instruction, and performing the ordinations after careful investigation and many testimonies given, subjecting every man to a careful examination and test in reading the Scriptures and repeating the psalms, and ability to write their names and signatures.³⁷

Candidates came from "every city as far as the frontier, and as far as Armenia and Arzanene, and the land of the Cappadocians and the sea-coasts."³⁸ Among them in 529 came the young John of Ephesus, to be admitted to the diaconate, while John of Tella was based in Marde. He arrived with a group of brethren from the Amidan monasteries, then in exile as well; they were warmly received by John of Tella, who knew of their communities by reputation and was impressed by their learning and discipline. The pioneer bishop left his mark on the young monk John, who "remembered always" the impact of his presence.³⁹

For a time John of Tella performed his ordinations from the city of Marde, in the company of Philoxenus of Mabbog and others. Severus wrote to them, praising them both for the excellence of their ascetic practices and for their labors on behalf of the Monophysite body.⁴⁰ The importance of John of Tella's ascetic training and prowess was not to be underestimated, as Severus knew. Not only must there be no charges of canonical misconduct, but John himself had to be above reproach.⁴¹ His ascetic training and vocation provided the necessary assurance and, as in the case of Severus himself, must have been genuinely formidable. But in the eyes of John of Ephesus, John of Tella was inspired to the work of ordination because of the nature of his religious calling. When he received official orders from the government to halt his subversive work, he gave the reply,

I for my part have received a gift from God, and with it I am trading and am not negligent; and know this, that, as long as I am in the bodily life, and a hand is given me to extend to anyone that is in need, not you nor any earthly king shall hinder me from performing the service that the heavenly king has given me.⁴²

The imperial authorities were understandably alarmed. It fell to Ephrem of Antioch, "the executioner of the believers" (as John of Ephesus calls him), to take on John of Tella.⁴³ John's eventual death in prison in 538 was as powerful as an act of martyrdom as his career was impressive throughout. It thus heralded disaster for pro-Chalcedonian hopes. John of Tella had been decidedly efficacious; if John of Ephesus exaggerates hopelessly in claiming that John ordained 170,000 men into the clergy,⁴⁴ it is of little concern. Two irrevocable steps had been taken: first, a network of ecclesiastical leaders had been established, ensuring the renewed care of the Monophysite congregations; second, the precedent of an independently ordained Monophysite structure had been established. If the founding of the "Jacobite" church has traditionally been attributed to Jacob Burd'aya, it was in fact John of Tella who laid the necessary groundwork.

From the "Life of John of Tella," John of Ephesus continues his collection with the story of John's spiritual brother and successor, John of Hephaestopolis.⁴⁵ Following a pattern similar to that of his predecessor, this John began his career as an ascetic. He was promoted to the episcopacy by the patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria, with whom he journeyed to Constantinople when the persecutions were launched in Egypt in 536. Not long thereafter, while living with the refugees in the imperial city, John of Hephaestopolis took up the task left by John of Tella to continue the ordination of Monophysite clergy.

Recognizing that he seemed to be straying from his professed intentions, and covering territory more appropriate for his *Ecclesiastical History*, John of Ephesus felt the need to defend his choice of bishops as subjects in this collection; he prefaced his "Life of John of Hephaestopolis" with this apologia:

[John of Tella and John of Hephaestopolis] were complete and perfect in both forms of beauty [pastoral and ascetic]; and for this reason, though we seem to be passing from one subject to another, we did not think it alien to the excellent purpose to describe and hand down to remembrance for the glory of God that life which was practised by these men also.⁴⁶

By granting these select bishops a place in his *Lives*, John strengthened their authority at a time when their activities involved a canonical and theological risk. Furthermore, the decision was both a declaration about Monophysite asceticism and a statement about Monophysite leadership. In the schema of John's *Lives* and in the ascetic vision they reflect, the campaign for ordinations set underway by John of Tella and

John of Hephaestopolis was in effect obligatory for men of their spiritual standing.

The imperial decree on the church in 536 had effectively confined the Monophysite bishops and clergy to the refugee camps in Thrace and Constantinople; Egypt was no longer safe territory, and John of Tella was soon imprisoned in Antioch. The need for pastoral care was acute. Crowds began to arrive in the imperial city, not only seeking solace from the Monophysite community but, even more, seeking ordination "as there was absolutely no man to extend a hand of ordination to any believer in the whole Roman territory as far as the Persian frontier."⁴⁷ Yet, even with Theodora's protective presence, those with authority refused to ordain the candidates, "as it was indeed truly impossible for them to live if an ordination were performed there, if the adversaries heard of it."⁴⁸

To John of Hephaestopolis, it seemed the bishops were no longer fulfilling their episcopal duties: "We for our part have been named pastors of God's church to no purpose, since we have suffered her lambs to be torn by wolves. . . . What is the benefit that we are now doing for God's church?" On his own authority, he acquired separate quarters in the capital with Theodora's help and began to ordain the "companies of those who were in distress, and had been for a long time beaten and buffeted and had none to relieve them."⁴⁹

An immediate and angry clamor arose from inside the Monophysite ranks, from those concerned about simple safety. But the patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria, now head of the Monophysite community in Constantinople, granted tacit blessing to the renegade's activities by disclaiming responsibility but not censuring John; Theodora herself begged John to "remain still and keep quiet like your companions and do not make priests in this city."⁵⁰ But John contrived to escape the imperial house prison and took his authority where it was needed. He traversed the islands and territories of the eastern provinces, receiving candidates for the priesthood, performing ordinations, and ministering to the congregations. The Chalcedonians complained to Justinian that "one of the bishops [from Constantinople] has come out, and has thrown the whole church into confusion."⁵¹ John's actions, indeed, bordered on the outrageous. In Tralles, John of Ephesus served wide-eyed as deacon while fifty men were ordained secretly in the upper-level women's gallery of a church, with a Chalcedonian service in full progress below; he tells us, "I was amazed at the man's courage and fortitude."⁵²

But John of Ephesus could look upon the ordinations only as an act of grace; in his eyes the two Johns were God given:

In this time of [the church's] distress also [God] set up these two pillars of light in it to comfort it; by whose holy prayers may schisms and strifes be done away from within it until the end, Amen!⁵³

John of Ephesus could not see that the process was irreversible. The ordinations were charged with the awareness of resistance. The momentum would neither be diverted nor reabsorbed into a "mainstream" church. By the time Jacob Burd'aya and Theodore of Arabia were consecrated to the task of replenishing a shrunken Monophysite hierarchy, the way was clearly set. Even without Jacob's energy, an equally decisive act would surely have taken place.

The death of John of Tella had left a gap partially filled by John of Hephæstopolis; but age and the hardships of enforced exile took their toll on the other leaders of the Monophysite body. Philoxenus of Mabbog had died in 523, and Severus himself died in 538 almost immediately after John of Tella. Most of the episcopal hierarchy marshaled by Severus had disappeared or been rendered ineffectual.⁵⁴ Then, in 542, matters changed. Harith bar Gabala, king of the Saracens and a Monophysite sympathizer, approached the empress Theodora because "a lack of priests had . . . arisen in the countries of the east and of the west, and especially of bishops."⁵⁵ He asked that she direct two or three bishops to be consecrated for Syria to ensure the welfare of his own tribes and fellow believers.

And, since the believing queen was desirous of furthering everything that would assist the opponents of the synod of Chalcedon, she gave orders and two blessed men, well-tried and divine persons, whose names were Jacob and Theodore, were chosen and instituted, one for Hirtha of the Saracens, that is Theodore, and Jacob for the city of Edessa.⁵⁶

Jacob began, John tells us, by sharing a cell in a Constantinopolitan monastery with another monk named Sergius.⁵⁷ Together they practiced arduous and severe ascetic labors, yet Sergius seemed to emerge second best in John's eyes. John explains that although Sergius practiced in the same manner as Jacob, he would also speak to those who approached their cell on matters of business and hence fell short of Jacob, who "entirely refused to take part in these things, and refused also to appear during the day outside his cell."⁵⁸ This was, of course, but a preparatory process.

Jacob and Theodore were not to be ordinary bishops; their jurisdiction was governed by the state of emergency in which the Monophysites found themselves. Their task was to restore the depleted ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and, specifically, to refill the sorely wanting

higher echelons. In Theodore the faithful had chosen a diligent worker; but with Jacob, the movement came into its own.

And, while the blessed Theodore exercised authority in the southern and western [Syrian] countries, and the whole of the desert and Arabia and Palestine, as far as Jerusalem, the blessed Jacob, having armed himself with religion, and clothed himself in the zeal of heroism, extended his course over all the countries not only of Syria and the whole of Armenia and Cappadocia . . . but also of Cilicia and the whole of Isauria and of Pamphylia and Lycaonia and Lycia and Phrygia and Caria and Asia, and in the islands of the sea Cyprus and Rhodes, and Chios and Mitylene, and as far as the royal city of Constantinople.⁵⁹

Once again, John's narrative turns to romance embellished with legend: the Monophysite movement was transformed, as if at once. Jacob "accomplished his ministry, causing the priesthood to flow like great rivers over the whole world of the Roman dominions."⁶⁰ He traveled over distances and at speeds that defied human strength: his disguises were impenetrable, his movements untraceable.

But the practicalities lie close by in John's story. Charged with so awesome a task, Jacob engineered the ordination of two other bishops to travel with him to ensure the canonicity of his ordinations and consecrations.⁶¹ John claims he ordained more than 100,000 clergy, as well as twenty-seven bishops and two patriarchs.⁶² Among these was John himself, whom Jacob consecrated to the titular see of Ephesus around the year 559. Before Jacob's efforts, it was possible to claim that the Monophysites did not constitute a separate church in their own right. But despite John's impossibly high numbers, Jacob did turn a *de facto* situation that had long been hardening, into an institutional one. The Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church had been founded.

The tracing of Jacob's activities—of exactly what he did and how he did it—is a sensitive operation.⁶³ As legends grew, his work was entwined with that of Severus of Antioch. Later tradition claimed that Jacob was consecrated to his task by the great patriarch himself.⁶⁴ These two have been glorified above all, yet neither would have accomplished their work without substantial efforts by their comrades. Jacob, for his part, ended his career a puppet in the factionalism of his own movement, far from the glory of his ecclesiastical conquests.⁶⁵

In fact, what had happened to the Monophysites in the sixth century, and what is unwittingly chronicled in John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, was a transformation of structure, as much in their thought as in the governance of their movement. Once an ecclesiastical

hierarchy was in existence, specifically in opposition to another system holding different bonds for communion (loyalty to the Council of Chalcedon), then the subsequent dialogues ceased to offer any real solutions to end the division. Refined theological definitions, even outright concessions, could not measure up to the concrete obstacle of two separate systems.⁶⁶

The pivotal point goes back to John of Tella. For wherever Jacob went, he found ranks of candidates, deacons or priests such as John of Ephesus himself, prepared for the priesthood; they had received their ordination at the hand of a Monophysite and aspired to fulfill their vocation within a Monophysite hierarchy. And he found, too, the receptivity of a laity pastored by such leadership.

But John of Tella had not sought such a consequence to his efforts, and it is here that one must look again to his inclusion, and indeed Jacob's, in the *Lives* of John of Ephesus. John of Ephesus was raised from his childhood within the Amidan ascetic community; he was ordained deacon by John of Tella, blessed by John of Hephaestopolis, and consecrated bishop by Jacob Burd'aya. The degree to which his ascetic views were shaped by the spiritual mentors he encountered, is the degree to which his *Lives* display a vision not his alone but shared by a significant part of the Monophysite body.

For John of Ephesus the particularities of the ascetic's situation are overridden by the ultimate responsibility of the ascetic's vow. Maro the Stylite had climbed his brother's pillar with fear but without hesitation. Z'ura the Stylite had responded to persecution by descending his pillar in order to protest at the imperial court of Constantinople. Susan had forfeited her devotion to solitude to guide an exiled community in Egypt. Simeon the Mountaineer had embraced the lost flocks of the Lord in their unwitting error; John of Tella had taken on the burden of ordaining shepherds for the faithful.

These holy men and women lived out a personal relationship with their God; ultimately, they were bound by neither canon nor ecclesiastical rank. John of Tella badgered his fellow bishops and superiors for official sanction to perform his ordinations; John of Hephaestopolis did not and took his authority and justification from the legacy of his predecessor. The official charge to Jacob Burd'aya was a virtual fait accompli, but he fulfilled it to an extent probably greater than his superiors had intended him to. Like the local ascetics of Amida, these men responded to the crises of their times according to their understanding of their vows.

ABBREVIATIONS

For dictionaries, encyclopedias, and collections, full details may be found in the Bibliography.

AER	<i>American Ecclesiastical Review</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AMS	<i>Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum</i>
Anal. Boll.	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>Annales: e.s.c.</i>	<i>Annales: économies, sociétés, et civilisations</i>
BEO	<i>Bulletin d'études orientales</i>
BHG	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca</i> , 3d ed., edited by F. Halkin; and idem, <i>Novum Auctarium BHG</i>
BHO	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis</i> , edited by P. Peeters
BMGS	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
BZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CSCO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syrii</i> (unless otherwise noted)
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
CSL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum</i>
DHGE	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques</i>

DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
DR	<i>Downside Review</i>
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique</i>
ECR	<i>Eastern Churches Review</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
GCS	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HE	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JME	<i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i>
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
NT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OCA	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OLP	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PETSE	<i>Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , edited by J. P. Migne
PO	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
POC	<i>Proche-Orient Chrétien</i>
RBK	<i>Reallexicon zur Byzantinischen Kunst</i>
RE	<i>Paulys Realenzyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
REJ	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
ROC	<i>Revue de l'orient chrétien</i>
SCH	<i>Studies in Church History</i> , edited by D. Baker, G. J. Cuming, S. Mews, et alii
SLNPNF	<i>Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>

SSTS	Studies Supplementary to Sobornost
Sub. Hag.	Subsidia Hagiographica
TU	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>
ZK	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>

Note on primary sources: For individual saints' lives not in major collections (e.g., John of Ephesus, *Lives*), see under *Vita* _____.

81. Ibid., 20, PO 17:278–83.
82. Ibid., 24, PO 18:521.
83. For example, ibid. 14 and 18, PO 17:213–20, 260–65; 29, PO 18:562–74.
84. Ibid., 14, PO 17:213–20 (Abbi); 17, PO 17:248–59 (the poor stranger); 19, PO 17:266–80 (Zacharias). Cf. also 20, PO 17:281–83; 28, PO 18:559–62; 51, PO 19:159–60.
85. Ibid., 18, PO 17:260–65.
86. Ibid., 260. On the ruling against leaving a monastery without release, see *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, ed. and trans. A. Vööbus, 33 (canon 26).
87. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 33, PO 18:592–601; 3, PO 17:42–44; 34, PO 18:601–6.
88. Ibid., 33, PO 18:599.
89. Ibid., 35, PO 18:614–17.
90. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 39–40 (John of Ephesus). See also Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.19. Cf. the parallel situation in John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 21, PO 17:293–97.
91. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 40–44 (John of Ephesus); Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.19.
92. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 23, PO 17:300–304.
93. Ibid., 304.
94. Ibid., 5, PO 17:98 (my trans.).
95. Ibid., 96–99.
96. Ibid., 96–101.
97. Ibid., 101–3 (my trans.).
98. Ibid., 103–11.
99. Ibid., 12, PO 17:176–78. Cf. pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 43–44 (John of Ephesus), for another account of secret aid by villagers when the Amidans were driven out of the monastery of the Poplars by Ephrem's troops, during the second persecution.
100. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 12, PO 17:171–86. On the significance of Euphemia's work, see chap. 6.
101. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 12, PO 17:184 (my trans.).

IV. Purpose and Places

1. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 48, PO 18:685; pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 8.5. It is probably to the Egyptian desert as a gathering place that this famous passage of pseudo-Zachariah refers.
2. Egypt's reputation for ascetic excellence was a serious factor for the Monophysite monks who came from elsewhere in the East, including Mesopotamia. For the nature of Egypt's spiritual authority in this realm, see Rousseau, "Spiritual Authority"; idem, "Blood-relationships."
3. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 27, PO 18:554. For an impression, from the Egyp-

tian viewpoint, of how Egypt itself was affected by the persecutions, see esp. Hardy, *Christian Egypt*; see also Evelyn-White, *Monasteries of the Wâdi 'N Natrûn*, 219–40.

4. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 27, PO 18:541–58. Arzanene was visited by Simeon the Persian Debater while on his missionary travels, *Lives*, 10, PO 17:145; and its clergy were ordained during the persecutions by John of Tella, *Lives*, 24, PO 18:519.

5. In the “Life of Susan,” *ibid.*, PO 18:547–48, John says the spot was about two miles from Mendis; and elsewhere, about twelve miles distant from the monastery of Mar Menas, PO 17:209. Mendis itself, he claims, was twenty-four miles above Alexandria, *Lives*, 13, PO 17:190 (see also Brooks’ footnote). Mar Menas was a celebrated monastery and its reputation was no doubt attractive to the newcomers; proximity may have seemed desirable. Cf. Hardy, *Christian Egypt*, 125–26 (“The shrine of St. Menas had become the Lourdes of the ancient world”); and see “Karm Abu Mena,” RBK, 1116–58 (M. Krause).

6. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 27, PO 18:548.

7. *Ibid.*, 550 (my trans.).

8. *Ibid.*, 554–56. Susan’s activities and John’s reactions to them are discussed in chap. 6.

9. Cf. Severus of Antioch, “Sévère d’Antioche en Égypte,” ed. and trans. W. E. Crum.

10. *Lives*, 48, PO 18:684–90.

11. *Ibid.*, 685. Here John carelessly gives the impression that Severus was received by the patriarch Theodosius, who was not consecrated to the see until 535 (and then somewhat violently: see pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.14; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.12). Theodosius was banished in 536 to Thrace and then to Constantinople, where he remained, guiding the Monophysites until his death in 566.

12. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 48, PO 18:685.

13. See esp. *Vita Severi* (John of Beith-Aphthonia); and for the sense of how this aura grew with Severus’ legend, see *Vita Severi* (Athanasius Scriptor), *Conflict of Severus*, ed. and trans. E. J. Goodspeed and W. E. Crum.

14. John is referring here (*Lives*, 48, PO 18:685) in particular to the doctrinal dispute between Severus and Julian of Halicarnassus. See esp. pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.9–13; and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.27, 30. The argument centered on Julian’s belief that the body of Christ was incorruptible; an excellent summary is in Casey, “Julian of Halicarnassus.” Cf. Hardy, *Christian Egypt*, 128–32.

15. For example, Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1.49, 2.3.

16. Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.13. In the letters pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor cites here, Severus describes himself contending against the Chalcedonians from Egypt, “I [am] a man who changes about from one place to another and have no convenient time for other things that are required” (*HE* 9.11 [*Syriac Chronicle*, ed. and trans. F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks, 235]). See also Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1.53.

17. *Lives*, 21, PO 17:283–98. See also 54, PO 19:186; 55, PO 19:192; 56, PO 19:197–99.

18. John of Ephesus, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.7–8.

19. *Lives*, 13, PO 17:187–213.

20. On Amida's bishops at this time, see Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites*, 100–101; also, "Joshua the Stylite," *Chronicle* LXXXIII; and pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 8.5. For Abraham bar Kaili, apparently consecrated by Paul "the Jew" of Antioch, see chap. 3.

21. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 13, PO 17:188.

22. *Ibid.*, 188–89.

23. *Ibid.*, 189–90. Cf. the description of Mare's adventures in pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 8.5.

24. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 13, PO 17:190.

25. John's account of the lives of Mary and Euphemia reflects the same intent, *Lives*, 12, PO 17:166–86. See the discussion of their story in chap. 6.

26. *Lives*, 13, PO 17:192.

27. John of Ephesus, *ibid.*, 25, PO 18:528, says of this campaign: "severe fighting and much slaughter took place in Alexandria, as is common in that great city." See also, for example, *ibid.*, 37, PO 18:629–30; Procopius, *Anecdota* 26.35–44; John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 90.81–89, 92.5–7; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.21, 25.

28. See the *Life of John the Almsgiver*, in *Three Byzantine Saints*, trans. E. A. Dawes and N. Baynes, 195–270; Monks, "Church of Alexandria"; Hardy, *Christian Egypt*, 139–41, 154–61.

29. Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.25. Cf. John of Ephesus' more general description of the persecutions throughout the East, in very similar language; *Lives*, 24, PO 18:524–25.

30. *Lives*, 48, PO 18:687. See also, for example, Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.27. Cf. Severus of Antioch, "Sévère d'Antioche en Égypte," ed. and trans. W. E. Crum.

31. See Evagrius, *HE* 4.9, for the pro-Chalcedonian view of Alexandria and Constantinople as the two main centers of religious dissent.

32. A point that particularly rankled Procopius: see the *Anecdota*. On Theodora, see Browning, *Justinian and Theodora*; Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* 2:27–35; and Diehl, *Théodora*.

33. Procopius, *Anecdota* 10.14–15.

34. *Ibid.* (*Opera*, ed. and trans. H. B. Dewing, 7:125).

35. Evagrius, *HE* 4.10. Cf. Allen, *Evagrius Scholasticus*, chap. 8, on Evagrius' treatment of Justin I and Justinian. Allen here points out that Evagrius adds credibility to Procopius' *Anecdota*, which thus cannot be dismissed as personal ranting.

36. Evagrius, *HE*, 4.10.

37. On Theodora's good deeds toward the Monophysites, see, for example, Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1.63; John of Ephesus, *Lives*; *idem*, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.2–5; pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.14; John of Nikiu, *Chron-*

icle 90.87–88; Jacob of Edessa, *Chronicon*, 321; *Chronicon anonymum* 819, 10; *Chronicon anonymum* 1234, LIV–LV; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.15, 20, 21.

38. *Chronicon anonymum* 1234, LV; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.20. This tradition still appeals to the Syrian Orthodox; it is retold in the play "Theodora," written in Arabic (1956) by Mor Faulos Behram, Metropolitan of Baghdad, and translated into Syriac (1977) by Mor Iuhannon Philoxenos Dolobani, the late Metropolitan of Mardin.

39. Browning, *Justinian and Theodora*, 40.

40. For example, Procopius, *Anecdota* 17.27; Evagrius, *HE* 4.10–11. It is notable, for example, that the pro-Chalcedonian *Melkite Chronicle* of the seventh century—in its reports on ecclesiastical and theological events involving imperial circles—does not once mention the energetic empress. See "Chronique melkite," ed. and trans. A. de Halleux, 13–18. This may be a simple case of male chauvinism, of course; pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor often omits mention of Theodora in places where her activity was decisive, for example, *HE* 8.5, 9.15 (cf. 9.19).

41. Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 8.5, 9.1; John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 90.49–59; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.34. It is interesting that John of Nikiu seems to transfer the respective characteristics of the imperial couple from one to the other. At *Chronicle* 93.1–3, he lists those figures who had most greatly adorned Rome: Romulus, Numa, Caesar, Augustus, "and subsequently came the empress Theodora, the consort of the emperor Justinian!"

42. The same respect is shown in his *Ecclesiastical History* for the emperor Justin II. See Cameron, "Early Byzantine Kaiserkritik."

43. For Theodora's correspondence with the Persian queen, *Lives*, 10, *PO* 17:157 (cf. Procopius, *Anecdota* 2.32–37); the hospitals she founded, *Lives*, 51, *PO* 19:161–62; and her prostitution, *Lives*, 13, *PO* 17:189. John's statement that Theodora "came from the brothel" (*porne* is his word) substantiates the leering charges of Procopius with none of the latter's scorn; see Procopius, *Anecdota* 9.1–30.

44. For example, *Lives*, 57, *PO* 19:200–206.

45. *Lives*, 37, *PO* 18:680. See also John's *HE*, *Fragmenta* 3.6, where John says the emperor was anxious to fulfill the will of his wife even after her death. Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.29, speaks of Justinian's grief at Theodora's death, with the implication that this led him to treat the patriarchs Anthimus and Theodosius with leniency.

46. *Lives*, 47, *PO* 18:681; pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon* 77–78, 125 (John of Ephesus); and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.25, 33. John also converted the Manicheans in Constantinople at Justinian's request; pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 75–76 (John of Ephesus); and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.25.

47. Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.25. It may be that the new converts could not appreciate the theological arguments waged over the Council of Chalcedon; but the missions to Nubia (not led by John of Ephesus) produced a self-consciously Monophysite following. See Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 297–303; Hardy, *Christian Egypt*, 141–43.

48. A good example is in John's *HE, Fragmenta* 3.4, where John went so far as to offend the emperor but does not appear to have suffered for his frankness (here he seems to have acted, at least in part, through intermediaries).

49. Cf. Cameron, "Early Religious Policies."

50. Gray, *Defense of Chalcedon*, esp. 154–64; Wigram, *Separation of the Monophysites*, chap. 8. Justinian seems to have shown high respect for certain of his theological opponents; for example, John of Ephesus, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.8. His aphthartodocetic views were similar to those of Julian of Halicarnassus; see n. 14 above.

51. Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 8.5. For Severus' cynicism, John of Ephesus, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.3. Darling, "Patriarchate of Severus," sees this attitude of Severus increasing over time, beginning as early as his years in Antioch.

52. See the documents in Brock, "Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox Conversations"; and "Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox," ed. and trans. S. P. Brock. Cf. pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.15; and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.22.

53. Brock, "Orthodox-Oriental Orthodox Conversations," 226.

54. *Ibid.*, 225; pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.15.

55. Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.16; see also Evagrius, *HE* 4.11.

56. John of Ephesus, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.3; *idem, Lives*, 48, *PO* 18:687; and Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 4:7.

57. John of Ephesus, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.3, 8; pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.19; Evagrius, *HE* 4.11; "Chronique melkite," 17–18; *Chronicon anonymum* 846, 223; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.22.

58. John of Ephesus, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.4; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.30.

59. For example, John of Ephesus, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.1; pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 12.6; Evagrius, *HE* 4.36; "Chronique melkite," 19–23; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.30. But the complexity of the picture is best gained in the overviews given by Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*; and Wigram, *Separation of the Monophysites*.

60. Best encapsulated in his *HE, Fragmenta* 3.2–8. The gradual wear does not seem to have crushed John's own spirit until matters internal to the Monophysites broke down under Justin II and Tiberius; see his *HE*, pt. III.

61. The significance of Constantine's example did not escape his contemporaries as can be seen in the works of Eusebius of Caesarea and, more generally, Lietzmann, *History of the Early Church*, vols. 3 and 4.

62. Here, too, the populace was highly influenced by ascetics, in this case by the "Sleepless" monks. The Trishagion riots were a case in point. Evagrius, *HE* 3.44; pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 6–7 (John of Ephesus); John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 9.9.

63. For a general sense of how Constantinople "worked," see Jones, *Later Roman Empire* 2:687–709; for its changing circumstances in the sixth century, see Cameron, "Corippus' Poem"; and *idem*, "Theotokos."

64. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 2, *PO* 17:18–35. See chap. 2, for a description of Z'ura's career in Mesopotamia.

65. Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 270, 272. John gives no indication of the date.

66. For mention of Z'ura, see Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 3.2; "Chronique melkite," 18; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.23; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* 1:206–12. Further references are noted by Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 272; the stylite apparently baptized Theodora, a considerable honor for both parties. Michael's account, as usual, primarily follows John's; so, too, does that of Bar Hebraeus.

67. *Lives*, 2, PO 17:22.

68. Cf. Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 11.1, where the patriarch begs a would-be solitary not to follow his own selfish desire for withdrawal but instead to face the religious crisis with action because the urgency of the times is so great.

69. *Vita Danielis Stylitae*, chaps. 72–85.

70. *Lives*, 2, PO 17:24–25.

71. Inaccuracy of this kind is characteristic of John's historical method; he tended to make his points by whatever means of emphasis seemed necessary. Procopius mentions two, or possibly three, severe illnesses contracted by Justinian: *Buildings* 1.6.5–8, 1.7.6–16; idem, *Wars* 2.23.20, which records the emperor's bout of bubonic plague. The first of these (*Buildings* 1.6.5–8) in particular bears a resemblance to John's account involving Z'ura, since Procopius claims that Justinian was healed by the intervention of Saints Cosmas and Damian after doctors proved unable to treat his near-fatal illness, and that this became the occasion for a shrine dedicated to the saints by the emperor.

This passage and its circumstances, rather than the vague story of an "eastern monk" and a gruesome apparition in Procopius, *Anecdota* 12.23–26, as Brooks suggests (PO 17:24 n.), seem an appropriate basis for John's story of Z'ura—unless the passage refers to the emperor's case of plague, which would have it happen at too late a date (Z'ura was banished from Constantinople in 536, and the plague did not arrive until 542). But this seems unlikely since Procopius would surely have mentioned it if the illness had been plague. If Z'ura had been involved, the emperor clearly could not have paid him tribute; the choice of Saints Cosmas and Damian would have been particularly appropriate, since their very popular cult had reached the Greco-Roman world through the Syrian Orient (in fact, the saints may originally have been Arab tribesmen). See Peeters, *Orient et Byzance*, 65–68. The church dedicated to Saints Cosmas and Damian may be the building now known as the Atik Mustafa Pasa Camii; see B. Aran, "The Nunnery of the Anagyres and the Mustafa Pasha Mosque: Notes," *JÖB* 26 (1977): 247–53; and Mathews, *Byzantine Churches of Istanbul*, 16. For an alternative, cf. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*, 123.

72. *Lives*, 2, PO 17:25–26.

73. *Ibid.*, 26–31; also Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.23; and Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* 1:206–12, where the two later chroniclers are primarily

dependent on John's account. See pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.15, 19, for another version of Agapetus' visit and death in Constantinople that, while not mentioning Z'ura by name, substantiates John's story with regard to the pope's death. Agapetus in fact did die of fever, as pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor indicates.

74. *Lives*, 2, *PO* 17:34–35.

75. *Ibid.* Theodosius was exiled from Alexandria in 536, in accordance with the general banishment order decreed at that time against Severus and the other Monophysite leaders. The "Chronique melkite," chap. 18, includes Z'ura's name in the list of those who were banned.

76. *Lives*, 37, *PO* 18:624–41.

77. *Ibid.*, 631. John might not have felt so embarrassed if Mare had directed his anger in this fashion toward anyone else; but his own position of favor in the imperial court made his reaction to the encounter necessarily awkward. It was not the passion but the disrespect that alarmed him. On this very incident Nöldeke remarked, "All this was in execrable taste; yet it is a real pleasure to see that there still were some people capable of confronting the servile 'Byzantinism' of the day in a way that was manly and independent" (Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, 230–31).

78. *Lives*, 37, *PO* 18:632–33.

79. *Ibid.*, 639.

80. *Ibid.*, 640.

81. *Ibid.*, 9, *PO* 17:136–37.

82. A summarizing chronological account of Theodora's patronage and its recipients is in Duchesne, "Protégés de Théodora."

83. *Lives*, 13, *PO* 17:187–213.

84. *Ibid.*, 207.

85. *Ibid.*, 212.

86. *Ibid.*, 47, *PO* 18:677.

87. In this chapter of the *Lives* (47, *PO* 18:676–84), John gives a tantalizingly confused picture of the Monophysite residences in Constantinople, mentioning in particular the palace of Hormisdas and a martyrion dedicated to Saint Sergius. The picture is hampered by both insufficient corroborative documentation and incomplete archaeological remains; John himself describes severe damage by fire to the Monophysite quarters. An effort to clarify John's presentation in this instance is made by Mango, "Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus"; and idem, "Church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus Once Again." On the Palace of Hormisdas, see Guiland, *Études de topographie* 1:294–305. On the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus, see Van Millengen, *Byzantine Churches*, 62–83. Neither Van Millengen nor Guiland uses John of Ephesus, despite his detailed (if confused) descriptions. Cf. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*, 358–59.

88. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 47, *PO* 18:677.

89. *Ibid.*, 679.

90. *Ibid.*, 680.

91. *Ibid.*, 48, PO 18:684–90. The patriarchs John includes are Severus of Antioch, Theodosius of Alexandria, Anthimus of Constantinople, Sergius of Antioch, and Paul (“the Black”) of Antioch.

92. See the accounts of these events in Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 270–73; *idem*, *Rise of Christianity*, 842–43.

93. Their leadership was of paramount import to the movement, and the act of their communion (which must have been around 535/6) with one another remained a critical landmark in Monophysite tradition. Following their ritual of communion, they maintained contact, sending numerous encyclicals to one another while in exile, and these were circulated with considerable impact within the church body. See, for example, pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 9.14–26; John of Ephesus, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.5–6; Evagrius, *HE* 4.11; “Chronique melkite,” 17; Jacob of Edessa, *Chronicon*, 319–21; *Chronicon anonymum* 846, 223, 228; and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.21. Severus was patriarch in Antioch from 512–518, when he was deposed; he died in Egypt in 538. Theodosius held the seat in Alexandria from 535–537 and remained in exile in Constantinople until his death in 566. Anthimus served as patriarch only from 535–536, when he resigned under imperial pressure; he survived in exile, hidden by Theodora, perhaps another seven or eight years.

94. See Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*; Wigram, *Separation of the Monophysites*; and Hardy, *Christian Egypt*.

95. For Severus’ problems, while exiled, in maintaining the internal discipline of the Monophysites, see, for example, Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1.49, 53, 57, 2.3.

96. *Lives*, 44, PO 18:661–68.

97. *Ibid.*, 664.

98. *Ibid.*, 664–65.

99. *Ibid.*, 661.

100. *Ibid.*, 33–34, PO 18:592–606; 38–41, PO 18:641–58; 46, PO 18:671–76.

101. *Ibid.*, 57, PO 19:200–206.

102. *Ibid.*, 200. This was the chamberlain Mishael, who served in the court of Anastasius; see Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1.19 and 9.1, and further references in Brooks’ footnote, *Lives*, 57, PO 19:200, n. 1. In *Sixth Book of Select Letters*, 9.1, Severus, who was patriarch in Antioch at the time, urged Mishael not to abandon his career in the court to become a solitary because the urgency of the Monophysite cause made a presence, such as his, in the palace all the more necessary. He offers high praise for the asceticism Mishael practiced while following a lay career, and he urges the chamberlain to accept his situation as one that bestows the crown of martyrdom.

103. *Lives*, 57, PO 19:201.

104. *Ibid.*, 205.

105. For example, John of Ephesus, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.5–6; and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.23.

106. For example, pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 75–76, 125

(John of Ephesus); Procopius, *Anecdota* 11.14–31, 28.16–18; and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.25, 32.

107. *Lives*, 33, PO 18:592–601.

108. *Ibid.*, 600–601.

109. Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 322–23; and especially Wigram, *Separation of the Monophysites*, chap. 12. The conduct of the Monophysite community in Constantinople was not, of course, the direct cause of the renewed persecutions in the 570s. But their activity may have been seen to contribute to Justin II's failure to secure a religious solution by theological dialogue; certainly, the nature of their presence in the capital must have been exasperating for those who sought a pro-Chalcedonian answer.

110. On holy fools, see Rydén, "Holy Fool"; and I. Špidlik and F. Vandebroucke, "Fous pour le Christ," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 5, cols. 752–70. The practice of holy foolery came to prominence in the Byzantine realm with the career of the Syrian ascetic Simeon Salos in the sixth century; but its inspiration derived from the Pauline teachings, 1 Cor. 4:10–13, once again a literalizing of symbols. The earliest appearance of a holy fool in Greek literature is in Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 39, where a nun feigning madness is revealed by divine vision as the holiest of ascetics. An elaborate Syriac version of the same story is in the "Life of Onesima," in John the Stylite, *Select Narrations of Holy Women*, ed. and trans. A. Smith Lewis. For an excellent analysis of the meaning of this form of asceticism, see Syrkin, "On the Behavior."

111. *Lives*, 52, PO 19:164–79. For another couple leading similar lives, see the *Life of John the Almsgiver* by Leontius of Neapolis, chap. 24 in *Three Byzantine Saints*, trans. E. A. Dawes and N. Baynes, 232–34. De Gaiffier, "Intactam sponsam relinquens," catalogs the variations on this theme; John's couple are treated at pp. 171–72. I am grateful to Professor Lennart Rydén for these references and others, and for discussing this chapter of John's *Lives* with me.

112. *Lives*, 52, PO 19:178.

113. Professor Lennart Rydén believes that this chapter is a novelette and is highly unlikely to have any basis in fact; de Gaiffier, "Intactam sponsam relinquens," takes this position and views John's account as a literary device. The general scepticism found in editor Brooks' own notes to the text indicates a similar perspective. Brooks is bothered in particular by the erratic chronology of the story. This I do not find to be a serious concern because it is a chronic problem in John's writings. Against Professor Rydén's view (and others), I must emphasize the chapter's uniqueness in the *Lives* if it is fictional and further point to the fool in *Lives*, 53, which undoubtedly reflects a genuine encounter and admittedly lacks the romantic tone of *Lives*, 52. Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, 234–35, believes that the basic story of the Amidan couple was true, but that it simply underwent elaboration in being told twice over. I do not believe that John, for all his carelessness, would insert a full-blown fictional account into his collection. Thus, if this story should turn out to be a pious fiction, then probably it was a later interpolation.

114. *Lives*, 52, PO 19:172.
115. *Ibid.*, 169.
116. See chap. 3.
117. *Lives*, 53, PO 19:179–85.
118. *Ibid.*, 183.

V. Spirituality and Accountability: Consequences of the Ascetic Vow

1. On the Monophysite missions see, above all, Hendriks, "Activité apostolique," where considerable attention is given to the situation discussed here—the remarkable role of the Monophysite ascetic in the matter of missions. Hendriks notes the singular fire and rigor of these monks; it is on this very point that John of Ephesus enlightens us. In general, see also Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, chaps. 8–9; and Wigram, *Separation of the Monophysites*, 138–40. The role of the persecutions cannot be overemphasized, especially in that it placed these Christians in new places among new people, with impressive stories to tell, although John reminds us that persecution was not the motivating force. The parallel situation for the Nestorians accounts for both the similarities and differences between the two groups in this regard. For a sense of how Nestorian tradition preserves this heritage of persecution and mission, see Mar Aprem, *Nestorian Missions*.

2. *Lives*, 16, PO 17:229–47.
3. *Ibid.*, 229.
4. *Ibid.*, 233–34.
5. *Ibid.*, 235–36.
6. *Ibid.*, 241. On the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant (*bnay and bnath qyāmā*), see p. 6 above.
7. *Lives*, 16, PO 17:241–42.
8. *Ibid.*, 245.
9. *Ibid.*, 247.
10. There is one indirect reference to invasions by the Huns, *ibid.*, 245, discussed earlier here in chap. 3, but no other connection is made to the events dominating the eastern provinces at that time.
11. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* 1:307–25, 2:342–60.
12. *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, ed. and trans. A. Vööbus, 121–22 (on the date, 115).
13. *Lives*, 10, PO 17:137–58. Additional material on Simeon of Beth Arsham is in pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 8.3; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.8–9; and Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* 1:190, 2:86. On Simeon's writings, see Duval, *Littérature syriaque*, 136–40, 342, 358–59. The shorter version of his famous letter on the persecution of the Christians in Najran is preserved from John of Ephesus' *HE* in pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 54–57; for discus-

sion of the letter, its versions, and problems, see I. Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najran*, Sub. Hag. 49 (Bruxelles, 1971).

14. On the origins and history of Persian Christianity, see Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*; Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire*; Brock, "Christians in the Sasanian Empire"; and Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*. For the continuing survival of Marcionism, see Fiey, "Marcionites." In accordance with Syrian tradition, John includes Bardaisan in the same category as Mani and Marcion. This is an unjust affiliation, as Bardaisan seems to have been "orthodox" and not of the same ascetically dualistic orientation as the other two. Cf. Bardaisan, "*Book of the Laws*," ed. and trans. H. J. W. Drijvers; and Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa*.

15. *Lives*, 10, PO 17:144.

16. *Ibid.*, 10, PO 17:138. Cf. for example, idem, *HE, Fragmenta* 3.2–4, 8.

17. *Lives*, 10, PO 17:140–41.

18. *Ibid.*, 138.

19. *Ibid.*, 142–43, 152–53, 157. In the incident with Anastasius, the Nestorians persuaded the Persian king that the "orthodox" (Monophysite) believers were traitors to the Persian throne, "since their faith also and their rites agree with those of the Romans." When Anastasius demanded that the persecutions be stopped, he also secured a royal decree that the Christian peoples of Persia should "not harm one another by reason of occasions of enmity" (*ibid.*, 142–43).

20. *Ibid.*, 152.

21. See, for example, *Lives*, 39, PO 18:645–47; 40, PO 18:647–51; 43, PO 18:658–60; 51, PO 19:159–64.

22. *Ibid.*, 47, PO 18:681.

23. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 75–78, 125 (John of Ephesus); Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.25, 33. Paganism was a problem that vexed the church like a festering sore. As Justinian's measures and John of Ephesus' enterprises showed, its continued presence was not viewed as a sign of lingering death but rather as a malignant cancer. It was not so many years earlier that pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor had written his *Life of Severus of Antioch*—less a biography than a treatise against persisting pagan worship and a refutation of the charges that the great patriarch had once been involved in such practices himself; see *Vita Severi* (Zachariah Rhetor). In fact, Severus had been a pagan as a youth and converted to Christianity while a law student in Beyrouth; for this evidence, see Garitte, "Textes hagiographique," esp. 335–46.

24. *Lives*, 40, PO 18:650; 43, PO 18:658.

25. *Ibid.*, 43, PO 18:659–60.

26. *Ibid.*, 46, PO 18:671–76.

27. *Ibid.*, 24, PO 18:513–26. Apart from the *Lives*, our major source is the contemporary (written c. 542) *Vita Iohannis Episcopi Tellae*, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks; see also, for example, Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 5.14; pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 8.4–5, 10.1; and *Chronicon anonymum* 846, 223. Honigsmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites*, 51–52, summarizes John of Tella's life and activities. John left us a number of ecclesiastical and monastic canons;

see the references in Honigmann on p. 52, and the discussion and texts in *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, ed. and trans. A. Vööbus, 55–61.

28. This was a very early inclination—while a young child, according to Elias. See the *Vita Iohannis Episcopi Tellae*, 40–42.

29. Cf. pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 8.5.

30. *Ibid.*, 515–56.

31. See esp. Frend, “Severus of Antioch”; idem, “Monophysites and the Transition”; and Vööbus, “Origin of the Monophysite Church.” More generally, cf. Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*; and Wigram, *Separation of the Monophysites*. Compare the altogether different perspective of the Nestorians in Brock, “Christians in the Sasanian Empire,” esp. 8–9.

32. The scene is vividly described in Severus’ *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1, “On ordinations.” He frequently quotes from the letters of the Cappadocian Fathers, and, indeed, the overlap between their situations is fascinating—especially for the way in which Severus chose to interpret the rather unsavory manipulation of ecclesiastical structure and law that Basil employed, and which Gregory of Nazianzus painfully suffered. See Basil, *Lettres*, ed. and trans. Y. Courtonne; and Gregory of Nazianzus, *Lettres*, ed. and trans. P. Gallay. Severus was, in part, converted by the writings of the Cappadocians while a student. See *Vita Severi* (Zachariah Rhetor); and *Vita Severi* (John of Beith-Aphthonia).

33. The controversy over Chalcedon had never been a dispute between theologians alone; from its beginnings it had stirred popular passions. See Frend, “Popular Religion”; and Gregory, *Vox Populi*.

34. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 24, PO 18:517.

35. Frend, “Severus of Antioch,” 273; idem, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 260–61. In both places, the author has misconstrued the year of John of Ephesus’ ordination, 840 of the Greeks (= 529/30), for the number of ordinations performed by John of Tella in one year; *Lives*, 24, PO 18:521.

36. *Ibid.*, 518.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, 519.

39. *Ibid.*, 521–22. John of Ephesus would have been in his early twenties at the time.

40. Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 5.14. For John of Tella in Marde, see also John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 15, PO 17:228.

41. Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1, “On ordinations.” The question of canonicity, particularly with regard to ordinations, was always provocatively argued when proceedings of diverse interests were conducted in the church. Severus, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1.2, points out that church discipline on ordinations was often remiss in times of persecution. He cites the (less than flattering) case of Basil’s orchestrated consecration to Caesarea in 370; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Lettres*, 40–45, presents the other side of that incident. Monophysite tradition, however, was something to be reckoned with: in his *Vita Severi*, John of Beith-Aphthonia remarks that Peter the Iberian’s consecration in 452 was per-

formed under adverse circumstances and would have been uncanonical but for the intervention of the Holy Spirit, who filled in for the requisite but missing third bishop. As John of Tella was primarily ordaining deacons and priests, the situation was not as awkward as that of Jacob Burd'aya and his comrade Theodore of Arabia, as discussed later here. For discussion of the concern with purity and the exclusive closing inward for persecuted or marginal groups, see Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

42. *Lives*, 24, PO 18:520.

43. *Ibid.*, 522–24.

44. *Ibid.*, 522.

45. *Ibid.*, 25, PO 18:526–40. For John of Hephaestopolis, see further Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites*, 165–67.

46. *Lives*, 25, PO 18:526–27. Cf. the discussion of Hendriks, "Activité apostolique."

47. *Lives*, 25, PO 18:529.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*, 530–31.

50. *Ibid.*, 534.

51. *Ibid.*, 536.

52. *Ibid.*, 538.

53. *Ibid.*, 540.

54. *Lives*, 49, PO 18:692.

55. *Ibid.*, 50, PO 19:153. Important background here is laid by Trimmingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs*.

56. *Lives*, 50, PO 19:153–54. In fact, another bishop, Cyrus, had already been performing some ordinations in Persia, much after the manner of the two Johns; but he was inaccessible to the Monophysites in Roman territory because of the wars in progress between Byzantium and the Sasanians. See pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 10.13; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.29.

57. *Lives*, 49, PO 18:690–97.

58. *Ibid.*, 691–92.

59. *Ibid.*, 50, PO 19:154. See Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites*, 158–63.

60. *Lives*, 49, PO 18:696.

61. *Ibid.*, 697; *idem*, 50, PO 19:155–56.

62. *Ibid.*, 49, PO 18:696–97; 50, PO 19:156–58. Cf. *Chronicon anonymum* 819, 10.

63. The question is treated in detail in Bundy, "Jacob Baradaeus." Principal sources for Jacob are the following: John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 49, PO 18:690–97; and 50, PO 19:153–58; *idem*, *HE*, pt. III; the letters to and from Jacob, in *Documenta ad origines monophysitarum illustrandas*, ed. and trans. J.-B Chabot, *Letters* 7, 23, 29, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36; pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 10.12; Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.29–31; and Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum* 1.213–18, 233–44. There is also the spurious *Vita Iacobi Baradaei*, falsely attributed to John of

Ephesus, edited and translated by E. W. Brooks; the attribution to John was supported by the plagiarism of certain passages from John's *Lives*, but it also indicates how venerable a historian John was held to be in later tradition, and the marked influence of his particular biographical rendering of Jacob's life even where legend had grown extensively. To this spurious *Vita*, 268–73, editor Brooks appends a short text that concerns the transfer in 622 of Jacob's relics from the Egyptian monastery at Casium where he died, to his former home, the monastery of Fsiltha at Tella.

64. See esp., *Sévère ibn-al-Moqaffa, évêque d'Aschmounain, Réfutation de Sa'îd ibn-Batriq (Eutychius)*, (*Le Livre des Conciles*), ed. and trans. P. Chébli, PO 3 (Paris, 1909), 208ff.; Chronicle of Seert, *Histoire nestorienne*, ed. and trans. A. Scher, 140–42; and *Le Livre de la Lampe des ténèbres par Abû l-Barakât Ibn Kabour*, ed. and trans. L. Villecourt, E. Tisserant, and G. Wiet, PO 20 (Paris, 1929), 733.

65. Jacob's demise is perhaps best summarized in Wigram, *Separation of the Monophysites*.

66. Honigsmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites*, is indispensable for understanding the structural evolution that took place in the Monophysite movement during the sixth century.

VI. Some Implications: The Case of Women

1. The critical analysis is Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*.

2. Luke 8:1–3, 10:38–42.

3. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*; idem, "Word, Spirit, and Power: Women in Early Christian Communities," in McLaughlin and Ruether, *Women of Spirit*, 29–70; C. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament," in Ruether, *Religion and Sexism*, 117–49.

4. 1 Cor. 14:33–35; 1 Tim. 2:11–14; Titus 2:3–5; Eph. 5:22–24.

5. Gal. 3:27–28.

6. Chadwick, *Early Church*, 58–59.

7. "The Acts of Paul," in *New Testament Apocrypha* 2: 322–90 (trans. 352–90), esp. 330–33, and 353–64 (trans. "The Acts of Thecla").

8. Cf., for example, A. Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. Moffat (New York, 1908), book 4, chap. 2. The role of mothers and wives as "missionaries" for the faith continued. Examples are legion; but, for instance, in the fourth century Augustine of Hippo was profoundly influenced by his pious mother Monica overshadowing his religiously unconvinced father. The two brothers Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa had the example of their devout mother Emmelia and, even more, their great sister Macrina.

9. For the inception and development of ministry and hierarchy for the ecclesiastical body, see, for example, Kirk, *Apostolic Ministry*; Fliche and Martin, *Histoire de l'église* 1:259–78, 373–86, 2:387–402. What happened to women in

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